Bengaluru Monday, April 20, 2026 Pages 14 Vol 79 No 109 ₹7

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DH
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The Power of Good

BCCI renews Agarkar's contract

Former pacer to continue as chief of senior selectors till next year
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Business

Oil price volatility lends EVs a strategic charge in India P.10

निर्वाचन सदन
NIRVACHAN SADAN

Political Theatre

EC cracks down on over 11,000 'unlawful' social media posts P.5

Nation

LeT's 'Khargosh' found in Saudi Arabia **P.9**

World

8 children killed in mass shooting in Louisiana **P.12**

Quickly

Eight drown in Cauvery in Mysuru dist

In separate incidents, eight people drowned in River Cauvery in K R Nagar and Periyapatna taluks of Mysuru district on Sunday, said officials. Six people, including two children, drowned in Cauvery near Arkeshwara temple in K R Nagar taluk, the police said. Two others drowned at Ranigate in Periyapatna taluk, added the officials.

Details on Page 4

Soon, IML to cost 20% more in Karnataka

In a move that could alter the pricing landscape of the spirits industry, the state government has issued a draft notification to implement a tax system based on the actual alcohol content. Wine Merchants Association General Secretary B Govindraj Hegde said the shift from MRP-linked slab system to an alcohol-by-volume metric would trigger a 10-20% price hike for IML.

Details on Page 4

Dinesh Trivedi likely to be next envoy to B'desh

Dinesh Trivedi, a former Union minister is expected to be appointed India's next High Commissioner to Bangladesh, sources said. Pranay Verma, who was serving as India's High Commissioner in Dhaka since September 2022, was on April 10 named as the next ambassador to Belgium and the EU.

Details on Page 8

Trump orders US negotiators to Pak, but Iran on fence

STICKING POINT: Tehran undecided on travelling to Islamabad amid US blockade of its ports

WASHINGTON/DUBAI, AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump said he was sending negotiators to Pakistan on Monday for talks with Iran just days before a ceasefire in West Asia expires, though Tehran has reportedly yet to decide whether it will participate.

Announcing the fresh diplomatic push, Trump also renewed his threats against Iran's infrastructure, saying in a post on his Truth Social account Sunday that without a deal, the US was "going to knock out every single Power Plant, and every single Bridge, in Iran. NO MORE MR. NICE GUY!"

"We're offering a very fair and reasonable DEAL, and I hope they take it," Trump said in his post.

Iran, however, appeared cool to the prospect of talks, particularly in light of the ongoing US blockade of its ports, according to Iranian media reports.

The Fars and Tasnim news agencies cited anonymous sources as saying Tehran had yet to decide whether it would take part and that "the overall atmosphere cannot be assessed as very positive", adding that lifting the US blockade was a precondition for negotiations.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said Sunday that the US blockade of Iran's ports and coastline is an act of aggression that violates the ceasefire between the two countries.

By "deliberately inflicting collective punishment on the Iranian population, it amounts to war crime and crimes against humanity," Baghaei said on social media.

State-run IRNA, meanwhile, pointed to the blockade and Washington's "unreasonable and unrealistic demands", saying that "in these circumstances, there is no clear prospect of fruitful negotiations".

▸ **Iran, Page 4**

US military helicopters flying above the strategic Strait of Hormuz during a patrol. AFP

TENSION IN WEST ASIA

- V-P JD Vance will again lead the US delegation, accompanied by top Trump aides Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner
- Iran's foreign ministry terms US naval blockade on Iranian ports a violation of ceasefire
- Pakistan's PM and foreign minister talk to top Iran officials about the need for "continued dialogue and engagement"

Islamabad prepares to host US-Iran talks

- Israel's military says a soldier died during combat in southern Lebanon
- Israel's defence minister says military will use "full force" in Lebanon if troops face any threat from Hezbollah

Hormuz remains closed

The Strait of Hormuz remained closed on Sunday, with Iran saying it would not reopen the maritime trade route until the US ended its blockade of Iranian ports. Shipping data showed traffic through the narrow waterway had come to a stop early on Sunday.

Details on Page 12

K'taka plans pulse push with 3 dals

To raise cultivation area to 39.65 lakh hectares by 2030-31

ASHWIN BM
BENGALURU, DHNS

> Following the CM's budget declaration, we have significantly hiked seed subsidies to encourage the adoption of new, high-yield varieties.
>
> **N Chaluvaraya Swamy,** Minister for Agriculture

BIG BOOST

- Farmers producing certified seeds will get Rs 4,500/ quintal for tur, Rs 3,000/ quintal for urad & other pulses
- Certified seeds will be made available at Raitha Samparka Kendras at a subsidised rate of Rs 60/kg
- To reduce losses, a 33% subsidy (up to Rs 25 lakh) is being offered for setting up mini dal mills and packaging units

Setting its sights on making Karnataka the pulse bowl of India, the state government has launched an expansion drive to boost the production of tur, urad and moong.

The department of agriculture has outlined a plan to increase the state's pulse cultivation area from the current 36.74 lakh hectares to 39.65 lakh hectares by 2030-31, with a primary focus on tur (pigeon pea), urad (black gram) and moong (green gram), while significantly enhancing yield through new technology and seed incentives.

According to the final estimates for 2024-25, Karnataka currently produces 20.57 lakh metric tons of pulses, with an average yield of 571 kg per hectare, and is the fifth highest producer in the country.

The first being Madhya Pradesh, which produces 58.51 lakh metric tonnes.

The agriculture department now aims to push this yield to 845 kg per hectare by 2030, leveraging varieties like GRG-152 (Bheema) and LRG-133-33, which are high-yielding, disease-resistant and mid-early/medium duration pigeon pea (red gram/tur) varieties.

Currently, India is a net importer of pulses with 38% of the imports coming from Mozambique, 24% from Myanmar and 23% from Tanzania.

▸ **Pulse, Page 4**

I-PAC suspends WB operations for 20 days

AMRITA MADHUKALYA
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Against the backdrop of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducting searches at locations linked to I-PAC, the political consultancy agency of the Trinamool Congress (TMC), has suspended its operations in the state.

The authorities made the announcement through emails to its employees late on Saturday.

The team has been told by the HR department that they should avail a 20-day leave. "We fully respect the law of the land, are cooperating with the process and are certain that justice will take its due course ... by May 11, we will regroup, review the situation, and decide the next steps," the communication stated.

Details on Page 5

23 killed in explosion at fireworks factory in Tamil Nadu

CHENNAI, DHNS

At least 23 workers, including 16 women, were killed in an explosion at a firecracker factory near Kattanarpatti village in Virudhunagar district on Sunday, according to the police.

The explosion took place at the Vanaja Fireworks factory.

Virudhunagar District Collector N O Sukhapatra said rescue workers have pulled out 23 bodies from the accident site and that four of the six injured are in a critical condition and are undergoing treatment at the Virudhunagar Government Medical College Hospital. Of the 23, 19 bodies have been identified, he added.

A second blast occurred during the rescue operations which led to injuries, the collector added.

"The blast took place when the workers were mixing chemicals," a police officer said, adding that the unit has a license from the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO), Nagpur.

"Over 100 labourers were inside the unit when the blast took place. The explosion was so powerful that three rooms were reduced to rubble," the officer added.

Sources said fire and rescue services personnel battled the flames for several hours.

Chief Minister M K Stalin expressed his sorrow and said he rushed two ministers to the site to expedite rescue operations. "The tragic news of the deaths of several people in the firecracker unit explosion that occurred in Kattanarpatti, Virudhunagar district, causes immense sorrow. My deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their lives," he said.

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi also condoled the loss of lives in the accident.

A damaged building at a firecracker factory in Tamil Nadu's Virudhunagar district on Sunday. PTI

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Poll fight is TN vs NDA: Stalin

MK Stalin has crisscrossed Tamil Nadu on the campaign trail since March 31. The CM steps off his van to address crowds, spends mornings at markets or tea shops gauging the election pulse. In an interview with **ETB Sivapriyan,** Stalin discussed his government's performance, the BJP, AIADMK, delimitation, and why the election is Tamil Nadu versus the NDA.

Interview Page 5

YELLOW SHEEN

Gold's golden run on but Indians tweak buying strategy

HRITHIK KIRAN BAGADE
BENGALURU, DHNS

India's appetite for gold and jewellery remains deeply entrenched, and the just-concluded Akshaya Tritiya once again reinforces this cultural and economic bond. Yet beneath steady demand, a clear shift is underway—consumers are increasingly balancing tradition with value consciousness, favouring lighter, design-led jewellery, and flexible purchase formats.

Even as gold prices hovered near record highs, driven by a strengthening dollar and geopolitical tensions, demand remained resilient. Industry observers, including the World Gold Council (WGC), note that while volumes have moderated, value has held firm due to elevated prices and festive sentiment. Early estimates suggest Akshaya Tritiya accounts for roughly 15-20% of annual jewellery sales for many retailers, underlining its importance in India's consumption calendar.

What has changed most is demand composition.

Buyers are shifting from heavy sets to lighter wearable pieces and contemporary designs. Flexible schemes like gold rate protection and lower making charges are increasingly shaping purchase decisions. According to the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), gold jewellery sales during last Akshaya Tritiya were around Rs 12,000 crore, forming the benchmark for assessment.

▸ **Gold, Page 4**

Returns on gold during past Akshaya Tritiya

(MCX, Rs per 10g)

Date	Price	Returns
Apr 26, 2020	₹46,527	+46.6%
May 14, 2021	₹47,676	+2.5%
May 3, 2022	₹50,808	+6.6%
Apr 22, 2023	₹59,845	+17.8%
May 10, 2024	₹72,700	+21.5%
Apr 30, 2025	₹94,700	+30.3%
Apr 17, 2026	**₹1,53,300**	**+61.9%**

Source: Bloomberg, Kotak Neo Research

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BNCC to hold daily reviews to track Census 2027 progress

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bengaluru North City Corporation (BNCC) has stepped up preparations for Census 2027, with Additional Commissioner (Revenue-in-charge) Pallavi chairing a review meeting on Sunday to assess the progress of preliminary work.

The meeting, held via video conference following directions from Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar, reviewed the status of house mapping, numbering, and field mapping across various jurisdictions.

Officials were directed to complete these tasks within the stipulated timelines.

Technical issues related to the mobile application used for census operations were also discussed. The Additional Commissioner instructed teams to resolve app-related glitches to ensure smooth data collection.

Emphasising the importance of the exercise, Pallavi urged officials to work in coordination and maintain accountability.

To ensure close monitoring, the corporation has decided to hold daily review meetings at 5 pm, with mandatory attendance for all officers concerned.

Private firm employee killed in accident near Hosur Road

BENGALURU, DHNS: An employee of a private firm died in a road accident after a tanker hit his two-wheeler near Hosur Road, police said on Sunday.

The deceased has been identified as Babu (52), a supervisor from Peenya.

According to police, the accident occurred around 8.30 pm on Saturday when Babu was returning home from work.

Babu fell after the tanker hit his two-wheeler. Babu, who sustained severe injuries, died on the way to the hospital, police said.

Preliminary investigations revealed that reckless driving by the tanker driver led to the accident.

"Babu was not wearing a helmet and suffered grievous head injuries. The tanker driver has been arrested and the vehicle impounded.

"Further investigation is underway," a police officer said.

A case has been registered at the Madiwala Traffic Police Station, the officer added.

56-year-old man found dead in car near E-City; murder angle probed

BENGALURU, DHNS: Bengaluru police have launched an investigation after a 56-year-old man was found dead under suspicious circumstances. Narayanappa, from Basapura, was found dead near Electronics City in the early hours of Sunday.

Police said the deceased had left home by car in the morning. Soon after, passersby alerted police about a body inside a car.

Police went to the spot with crime scene officers and forensic analysts.

They recovered the body and sent it for autopsy.

While the autopsy report is awaited, investigators, prima facie, found injury marks on the face and chest of the deceased.

His family members have been informed, police added.

Based on a complaint, police have launched an investigation to ascertain the sequence of events and whether the deceased was murdered. The motive remains unclear, police added.

PEOPLE'S
PROBLEMS

Need a hand? Write to us

Letters of grievances are pouring in and we are doing our best to accommodate as many as possible. Readers may write in to highlight civic problems affecting their locality and we will help address them in an interactive and effective manner.

Grievances and issues related to public utility agencies such as Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) and Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (Bescom) would be highlighted in the weekly column.

The writeups, which could be accompanied by photographs highlighting the problems, will be published on Mondays. Mail your grievances to: peoplesproblems @deccanherald.co.in

Building materials dumped on footpath

Encroached footpaths cause inconvenience to pedestrians.

The pedestrian path on the left side of KSIT Road, Gubbagabla, off Kanakapura Road, is in a completely unusable condition due to ongoing construction by KSIT authorities.

Building materials have been dumped on the footpath, forcing senior citizens like us to walk on the main road, which poses a serious safety risk.

In addition, a pucca shed has been erected on the pedestrian path to store construction materials. This is particularly concerning, as a traffic police booth is located barely 100 metres away, yet no action has been taken to remove the obstruction.

The authorities concerned are requested to clear the pedestrian path immediately to ensure safe and unhindered movement for pedestrians.

B Murthy

Noise pollution from BMTC depot

We, the residents of St Michael's Church Road, Shanthinagar, wish to bring to your kind notice the serious issue of noise pollution we have been facing from the electric vehicle (EV) charging stations located inside BMTC Depot 3, which is adjacent to our residences.

Every day, around 7 pm, these EV charging stations are activated for charging electric buses, and a continuous beeping noise persists throughout the night until early morning, around 4 am.

As a result, we are unable to get even a wink of sleep during the night, nor are we able to carry out our work — both official and personal — at home due to this persistent noise disturbance.

We have already written to the local MLA NA Haris and the BMTC authorities; however, our grievance remains unaddressed.

S Viswanath, S Venkatesh and Shankarprasad Sastry

Hesaraghatta poultry farm declared 'infected zone' due to bird flu

Samples are being collected from birds to monitor the outbreak and infection patterns. FILE PHOTO

10-km high-alert zone declared around affected farm

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Bengaluru Urban district administration has declared the state-run poultry farm area in Hesaraghatta an "infected zone" after bird flu was confirmed among the poultry there.

Authorities have marked a one-km radius around the affected farm as the infected zone and a 10-km radius as a high-alert surveillance zone.

Chickens, chicks, eggs, poultry feed and manure within the one-km radius are being disposed of in line with government bio-security guidelines.

"Disinfection work in the area is underway. We urge the public not to panic as all necessary precautions are being taken to prevent any further transmission," the deputy commissioner's office said.

Public advisory

While the risk of human infection remains low, authorities have advised residents to report any unusual bird deaths to the nearest veterinary office. Blood tests and samples are being collected from birds in surrounding areas to monitor the outbreak.

The administration has banned the transportation, movement and exhibition of all species of birds, meat, eggs and poultry feed within the affected and alert zones.

Checkpoints, surveys

Five checkpoints have been set up on major roads connecting Hesaraghatta to the rest of Bengaluru to restrict the movement of poultry products.

Health officials are conducting door-to-door surveys in the 10-km alert zone to track any suspected bird deaths.

No water, toilets or rest: Struggles of female gig workers on the job

Platforms pile on fines while denying basic facilities

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

Female gig workers in Bengaluru have raised concerns about the working conditions on online platforms offering at-home services, particularly in domestic work and the beauty industry, with access to toilets emerging as a key issue.

Janani, a 35-year-old domestic worker with a popular online platform, said she avoids drinking water while on duty to sidestep the need for a washroom.

"I usually walk from one booking to another, and in this heat, I get very thirsty. But I refrain from drinking water, because I am not always sure if there will be a washroom available for me to use. Often, the people who book my services do not allow me to use the washrooms and public toilets, too, are not available everywhere," she said.

She added that the company offered no help when she raised the matter with the management.

Workers also pointed to the lack of resting spaces, forcing many to rest on footpaths and at bus stands.

JANANI
Domestic worker

> "I usually walk from one booking to another, and in this heat, I get very thirsty. But I refrain from drinking water, because I am not always sure if there will be a washroom available for me to use. Often, the people who book my services do not allow me to use the washrooms and public toilets, too, are not available everywhere.

PICTURE FOR REPRESENTATION PURPOSE ONLY

"I suffered from dehydration last week. I was in no condition to work and had to cancel bookings for the rest of the day, but I was charged a fine for the cancellations.

"I am currently looking for other jobs, as I am not able to keep up with back-to-back bookings in the heat," said Lakshmi (name changed), a 39-year-old beautician.

Beyond cancellation charges, workers also face fines for delays. A five-minute delay can attract a fine of Rs 10.

"Even though I make Rs 30,000 in a month, I end up getting less than Rs 25,000 after all the deductions. If we cancel bookings, even due to an emergency, our ratings will fall, and we end up losing money," Lakshmi added.

Selvi, a 38-year-old beautician, was terminated from Urban Company in December 2025 for demanding "basic human rights", she said.

"I worked with the company for five years. When you are new, they offer many incentives, but later on, they start stripping everything away. In the last year, they brought in several rules that control gig workers, while offering no job security. We were stuck working for 13 hours, unable to decline or cancel any bookings. When I spoke up against the injustice and encouraged more women to do the same, they fired me," she told *DH*.

Urban Company did not respond to *DH*'s queries.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Basava Jayanthi: Shivarudra Swamiji, Siddaiah Gurugalu, Nanjundaswamy, S Pinakapani to attend; Vachanajyothi Balaga; Jagajyothi Basaveshwara Hostel, next to Hosahalli metro station, Vijayanagar; 6.45 am.

Vishwa Basava Jayanthi: Siddaramaiah, DK Shivakumar, Shivarudra Swamiji, KH Muniyappa, Ramalinga Reddy to attend; Basava Samithi; Anubhava Mantapa Auditorium, Basava Samithi, Basaveshwara Circle; 9.30 am.

CULTURAL

26th Anniversary: Shivashakthi Natya Shale; Purushothama Bilimale, Dr CN Ashwath Narayan, SR Vishwanath to attend; Organised by Shivashakthi Natya Shale; Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Malleswaram; 5 pm.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST
Partly cloudy sky
TEMPERATURES

Maximum	37.0°C
Minimum	23.0°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	NIL
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	26%
Sunset (Apr 20)	6:33 pm
Sunrise (Apr 21)	6:05 am
Moonrise	7:19 am
Moonset	8:36 pm

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

BWSSB to launch India's largest biogas initiative

BENGALURU, DHNS

BWSSB officials inspect a sewage treatment plant in Bengaluru as part of a Rs 120-crore project to convert sludge into compressed biogas (CBG). PHOTO: DIPR

In a first-of-its-kind initiative in the country, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) plans to turn sewage sludge into a significant revenue stream.

By converting raw biogas from five of its largest sewage treatment plants (STPs) into compressed biogas (CBG), the board expects to generate an additional Rs 120 crore over the next 20 years.

The project, which recently received state cabinet approval, will be implemented under a public-private partnership (PPP) model.

The private concessionaire will bear the entire capital expenditure of Rs 85 crore and manage operational costs, ensuring no financial burden on the BWSSB.

While similar projects in cities such as Surat process around 120 MLD of water, the Bengaluru initiative is significantly larger, utilising 550 MLD of sewage.

BWSSB Chairman Ram Prasath Manohar said the project, guided by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, aims to turn "waste into wealth" while strengthening the city's energy security.

The purified CBG will be used as a clean transport fuel or injected into the city gas distribution network.

The BWSSB also plans to scale up the technology to all STPs equipped with bio-digesters across the city.

Mere 'congestion tax' will not solve ORR's traffic woes, say commuters & IT workers

Slow-moving traffic at Outer Ring Road. DH FILE PHOTO

BENGALURU, DHNS: Even as frequent commuters on the Outer Ring Road (ORR) praise steps to improve traffic movement in recent months, they are concerned about the overall development of the road's infamous stretch.

In March, the 5th State Finance Commission introduced congestion charges on busy city roads, including the ORR, to reduce traffic and pollution.

"The idea has been proposed many times, but no progress has been made," said a senior official from an IT company located on the stretch, adding that no government wants to touch the issue. "This is one of the city's richest corridors. The sheer density of people using this stretch means congestion tax will not have an impact. People will not hesitate to pay the charges. We need a holistic approach."

Outer Ring Road Companies Association (ORRCA) president Manas Das echoed the view.

"We did not have traffic issues in the past few months, thanks to the road conditions," he said, admitting that there is congestion during peak hours. He said authorities should fast-track projects cleared by the government like white-topping roads, improving service lanes, and solving parking issues.

Bengaluru City Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh said traffic along the ORR has improved since BMRCL equipment has been cleared from the stretch.

"With the completion of the Namma Metro Blue Line work, the BMRCL has cleared up the heavy equipment and debris," he said, adding the city police is yet to be involved in the discussion about the congestion tax. He said the department favours the move.

RK Mishra, urban expert and independent director at Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Limited (B-SMILE), said should the government approve the congestion tax, it would be introduced only in early 2027.

"To levy the congestion tax, we need to first provide better roads and public transport," he said, adding that the tax cannot be imposed without completion of the metro project. "Regarding road improvement projects, we are sending out tenders on April 18," he further added.

The stretch of ORR between the Silk Road Junction and KR Puram will be revamped at Rs 450 crore.

DHiE Schools: CBSE Class 10 Results 2025-2026

Congratulations to the students of DHiE schools on their meritorious performance in the CBSE examination

		1st Place		2nd Place		3rd Place	
NAME OF THE SCHOOL	LOCALITY	NAME	%	NAME	%	NAME	%
St Sophia Convent High School	Nagarabhavi	Shreya M	97.0%	Shuban R	94.0%	Anagha H S	92.0%
National Public School	Chikkabanavara	Anvitha Sanadi	97.6%	Aarav Sudhir Naik &	96.6%	Anvita Sahoo	96.2%
National Public School	Chikkabanavara			Janya M Gowda	96.6%		
MVJ International School	Marathahalli	Bhuvan Biradar	91.6%				
Emerald International School	Hongasandra	Saanvi Sunku	95.0%	Anushka Nair	94.0%	Rajeswari Patra	93.0%
Emerald International School	Hongasandra	A V Jaswini	95.0%	Dhiraj S Poojari	94.0%	Akanksha Chakraborty	93.0%
Emerald International School	Hongasandra			Pranitha P	94.0%	Anshikha	93.0%
Emerald International School	Hongasandra					Bhargavi Damoji Purapu	93.0%
Sree Ayyappa Education Centre	Chikkabanavara	Devananda Bijesh	97.2%	Adira T	97.0%	Abhiram Vasishta	95.4%
Army Public School	Kamaraj Road	P S Bargav Yajvan	97.8%	Pia Kotwal	97.2%	Shivam Chaudhary	97.0%
Army Public School	Kamaraj Road	Aadya Singh	97.8%	Palaksha Darne	97.2%	-	-
Army Public School	Kamaraj Road	-	-	Shrawani Shahajikatkar	97.2%	-	-
National Public School	Yeshwantpur	Vihan Hiremath	99.2%	Mohammed Zayan Khan	98.4%	Kaustubhan Harish	98.2%
National Public School	Jalahalli	Arshia Kaler	97.4%	Virika Garg	96.4%	Jay Aaryan Agrawal	96.0%
National Public School	Jalahalli					Aneesh Rao	96.0%
PM Shri KV MEG &Centre	Sivan Chetty Garden	U T Bhavishya	97.0%	H V Vismitha Rao	97.6%	Astitva Giri	95.8%
National Public School	Rajajinagar	Animesh Gupta	99.2%	Sidharth Srivatsan	98.8%	Eva Rai	98.4%
St Joseph's School (CBSE)	Vittal Mallya Road	Marc Thomas	97.2%	Adisha M D	96.0%	Sangini Mahala	95.3%
National Public School	Indiranagar	Swanti Goel	99.4%	Dhruvank Kamlesh Dholariya	99.0%	Mili Rajesh	98.8%
Bright Public School	Kacharakanahalli	Abhay Surya J	90.4%				
Vishwaprajnaa Academy	Yelachaguppe	Samarth S	98.0%	Vikas Gowda	96.0%	Lekha G S	95.0%
Christ International School	Kithaganur	Megharaj B Dabagondi	90.0%				
East West Academy	Rajajinagar	Krisha S	97.8%	Tanishka J	97.6%	Adarsh Bhadri	95.4%
East West Academy	Rajajinagar					Devraj Sancheti	95.4%
East West Academy	Rajajinagar					Sruthika	95.4%
JSS Public School	HSR Layout	Chinmayee Av	99.0%	Abhijit S Kamath	98.6%	Sanyuktha K	98.2%
Sri Jnanakshi Vidyaniketan	RR Nagar	Shreyas S	96.3%	Sinchana Harasur	95.2%	Adithi Krishna P	94.5%
Sri Jnanakshi Vidyaniketan	RR Nagar			Stuti S Bahmanapad	95.2%		
National Public School	Koramangala	Sreejani Bhaduri	99.6%	Sreyan Panda	98.8%	Arham Gada	98.4%
Silicon City Academy of Secondary Education	Konanakunte	S K Thanushree	98.2%	Indu R	97.6%	Dheeraj R	97.2%
						Anvita S V	97.2%

KEA invites applications for 632 agri officer posts

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) has released a notification for the direct recruitment of agriculture officers and assistant agriculture officers for the Department of Agriculture.

Prospective candidates can begin submitting their applications online starting April 19. According to the official notification, the recruitment drive aims to fill a total of 632 vacancies (including backlog positions) for Group-B cadre posts.

Interested and eligible candidates must apply through the KEA official website: https://cetonline.karnataka.gov.in/kea/.

HDK scotches rumours of Zameer rejoining JD(S)

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy on Sunday denied speculations that Minorities Welfare Minister B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan was attempting to rejoin JD(S).

"Neither has Zameer contacted me nor am I interested in him. I am not the kind of person who seeks to capitalise on political instability in other parties," he told reporters here.

"He has not approached me. I don't want to repeat past mistakes by admitting certain leaders," Kumaraswamy said.

The Congress high command is reportedly displeased with Zameer, a former JD(S) leader, over alleged anti-party activities during the recent Davangere south byelection.

There were strong indications that he might be asked to resign as minister in the Siddaramaiah government.

Over 27% of construction workers suffer from liver ailments

Labour department screened 24 lakh workers in last 2 years

PAVAN KUMAR H
HUBBALLI, DHNS

Nearly 27.7% of the 24 lakh construction labourers screened by the Labour department in the last two years have liver-related ailments, and another 27.1% are suffering from hypertension. Over 3.34 lakh (13.7%) are diabetic.

While doctors say that hypertension and diabetes among construction labourers are almost on a par with the general population, they are concerned about the higher number of labourers suffering from liver ailments. Doctors fear that the higher numbers could be due to the large-scale prevalence of alcohol consumption, along with unhygienic methods of tattooing and vaccination.

According to a document from the Karnataka Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board, Karnataka has over 32 lakh registered construction workers, including plumbers, electricians, painters, masons, helpers, and others . Out of this, the Board has conducted health checks for 24 lakh beneficiaries over the last two years. Under the Preventive Health Care scheme, these labourers were tested for 23 different medical parameters. The findings show that 6.76 lakh workers above the age of 40 are suffering from liver diseases, 6.71 lakh from hypertension, 3.34 lakh from diabetes, and 2.26 lakh from anemia, among other conditions.

Karnataka Medical College and Research Institute, Hubballi Director Eshwar Hasbi said that the prevalence of liver ailments among construction labourers is comparatively higher than that in the general population. "Alcohol consumption could be one of the reasons. Secondly, many labourers get tattoos from unhygienic sources, resulting in Hepatitis A and B, which in the long run could impact the liver," he said.

According to a document from the Karnataka Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board, Karnataka has over 32 lakh registered construction workers. DH FILE PHOTO

No data analysis

A senior doctor from the Bengaluru Institute of Medical Sciences said that unless the reasons behind these ailments are analysed, it would be difficult to pinpoint the exact causes. The department should further study the root causes of health issues among the working class, he added.

At present, the Board is not analysing the data it has collected.

"The screening of labourers has helped the Board in two major ways: we were able to identify people who needed medical assistance and provide them not only with treatment but also prevent further complications. Secondly, we were able to identify unregistered labourers and enrol them for welfare," said a senior officer.

Data shows that nearly 7.34 lakh beneficiaries underwent treatment for various ailments after the screening.

The scheme is not limited to labourers from Karnataka but also includes migrant workers from other states.

The officer said that currently, medical technicians visit construction sites, collect blood samples, and conduct other tests. Medical reports are sent to workers via WhatsApp, and hard copies are also provided. "If any labourer requires additional help, our mobile health unit provides further assistance, or beneficiaries are referred to larger hospitals for treatment," he said.

The biggest challenge for the Board in providing long-term solutions is migration.

Labour Minister Santosh Lad said, "Irrespective of whether they are members of the Board or not, we want to provide treatment to them. However, due to constant travel and shifting workplaces, we are unable to follow up with them."

He added that a universal card will soon be introduced to help labourers access treatment anywhere.

SANTOSH LAD
Labour Minister

> "Irrespective of whether they are members of the Board or not, we want to provide treatment to them. However, due to constant travel and shifting workplaces, we are unable to follow up with them.

KSCA distances itself from IPL ticket resale racket

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) on Sunday distanced itself from the IPL ticket resale racket.

DH reported on Saturday that Bengaluru police are searching for an alleged KSCA member suspected in the racket related to procuring match tickets through authorised channels and selling them at inflated prices. However, police clarified that it cannot be established whether the suspect, Ganesh Harikesh, is associated or affiliated with the KSCA until he was arrested.

Police have, so far, arrested 11 suspects in the case. Among the suspects are corporate entities and individuals. Since it is not easy to black market m-tickets, police believe an insider made bulk purchases.

In a statement, the KSCA clarified that it has no connection - direct or indirect - with the entities currently under scrutiny. It also stated that none of the individuals involved in the case are KSCA members.

The association emphasised that it is neither the ticketing agency nor the selling authority for the Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB). "Ticket sales to the general public are undertaken exclusively through the franchise's authorised channels and its designated ticketing partners," it said.

The KSCA further explained that it receives only a limited allocation of tickets, which are distributed strictly among affiliated cricket-playing clubs, permanent members and certain statutory or government authorities that provide services to KSCA. "KSCA does not sell tickets to the general public," it reiterated.

Refuting any alleged links, KSCA maintained that the entities under investigation have no association with the body in any capacity.

KSCA STATEMENT

> "Ticket sales to the general public are undertaken exclusively through the franchise's (RCB) authorised channels and its designated ticketing partners.

(From left) H N Suresh, director of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (BVB), Bengaluru Kendra; K G Raghavan, chairman of BVB; Dr Padma Subrahmanyam, Bharatanatyam artiste, scholar and Padma Vibhushan awardee; Shatavadhani R Ganesh, Padma Bhushan awardee; Justice Krishna S Dixit; and Chiranjiv Singh, former Ambassador to UNESCO and vice chairman of BVB, Bengaluru Kendra, at the release of the book 'Echoes from Ramayana' in the city on Sunday.
DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

Bhavan's Bengaluru Kendra diamond jubilee kicks off with Ramayana book launch

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (BVB), Bengaluru Kendra, began its diamond jubilee year on Sunday by honouring Shatavadhani R Ganesh for his recent Padma Bhushan award.

The event also saw the launch of 'Echoes from Ramayana', authored by BVB Bengaluru chairman K G Raghavan.

The ceremony reflected on the state of contemporary scholarship. Justice Krishna S Dixit, judge of the Odisha High Court, said in his address that in a "climate where true erudition is often met with hostility", a scholar of Ganesh's stature deserved the nation's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna.

"Blessed is the king who goes to the scholar, and cursed is the scholar who goes to the king. Shatavadhani Ganesh has never chased titles, he is a man who could reproduce our entire ancient heritage from memory if it were ever lost," he added.

Former ambassador to UNESCO Chiranjiv Singh described 'Echoes from Ramayana' not as a dry academic text, but as a devotional manthana (churning), praising its contemporary relevance.

"No one reads the Ramayana for the first time; we are always rereading it because it is part of our upbringing," he reflected.

"Raghavan's book explores forests, the environment and the role of women in the epic, making it a guide for righteous living," Singh said.

He also lauded the aesthetic quality of the publication, saying it deserved national awards for printing excellence. The volume features a foreword by Ganesh and legal titan K Parasaran.

Raghavan said the felicitation is the first of many programmes planned for BVB's 60th year, including a five-day literary festival and a global music summit, Sangeetavani.

Man dies of 'heat stroke' near Bidar

KAMALNGAR (BIDAR DIST), DHNS: A 20-year-old man is suspected to have died of heat stroke on Kamalngar-Diggi national highway in the district. The deceased is Mohammed Sameer, who hailed from UP. He was working at a saloon in Kamalnagar.

It is said he complained of giddiness, collapsed and died near the NH. A case has been registered.

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सूचना एवं जनसंपर्क विभाग, झारखण्ड

'Southern states would've got more LS seats than 2011 projections'

BENGALURU, DHNS: Former union minister Anurag Thakur on Sunday criticised the INDIA bloc for defeating the 131st Constitutional amendment bill, saying that it stalled women's reservation.

Addressing a news conference, the BJP leader accused the Congress, DMK, TMC and SP of putting up a "false narrative" that delimitation would punish and hurt southern states.

Thakur claimed that the Modi government intended to propose a 50% increase for each state as per which he claimed all south Indian states would have gained more seats than the 2011 projections. He claimed that the proportion of seats held by south India would have continued as it is.

Thakur slammed the then Indira Gandhi government's decision through the 42nd Constitutional amendment in 1976 to freeze the number of seats in the Lok Sabha to a maximum of 550 for 25 years, based on the 1971 census figures.

He accused the Congress of "stopping" 4 attempts by the Vajpayee government between 1998 and 2003, to provide political reservation to women.

Referring to the bill piloted by the then ruling Congress to provide women's reservation in Rajya Sabha in 2010, Thakur wondered why the bill, passed with big numbers in the Upper House, wasn't passed in the Lok Sabha.

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Govt issues draft on alcohol-by-volume tax regime

Wine merchants say IML prices may go up by 20%

BENGALURU, DHNS

In a move that could significantly alter the pricing landscape of the spirits industry, the state government has issued a draft notification to implement a tax system based on the actual alcohol content in beverages.

If finalised, Karnataka will become the first state in India to adopt the Alcohol-in-Beverage (AIB) taxation model, a practice common in the West.

Wine Merchants Association General Secretary B Govindraj Hegde said that the proposed shift from the current MRP-linked slab system to an alcohol-by-volume (ABV) metric is expected to trigger at least a 10-20% price hike for Indian Made Liquor (IML), specifically impacting popular cheaper spirits like 'Old Tavern'.

The brunt of this policy shift is likely to be felt by the lower-income segment. Under the existing system, liquor is sold across various price slabs.

However, the new draft suggests that higher alcohol concentration will attract higher tax.

Currently, the first four slabs of liquor which account for nearly 80% of the state's excise revenue contain an average alcohol strength of 42.8% ABV.

So, typically a 180 ml bottle (quarter) the price of which currently retails between Rs 80 to 95, could jump to Rs 105 to 110 once the new rules take effect.

"The first four slabs cater to the general public. A sharp increase in prices here will undoubtedly disrupt the market dynamics and a slow poison for our trade. We intend to discuss this with the chief minister and are hopeful that the government will consider industry feedback before issuing the final notification," he said.

The move marks a departure from the state's six-decade-old excise policy. By targeting the pure alcohol content rather than the total volume of the liquid or its market price, the government aims to streamline revenue collection.

The government has invited objections and suggestions on the draft notification.

Defeat of Constitutional bill victory for INDIA bloc: DKS

BENGALURU, DHNS

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Sunday hailed the defeat of the 131st Constitutional Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha as a victory for the INDIA bloc.

The 131st Amendment proposed raising the strength of the Lok Sabha from the existing 543 to 850, besides reserving 33% of the seats in the Parliament and state's legislatures for women.

Although the opposition has voiced its support for the Women's Reservation Bill, it is opposed to the legislation being linked to the delimitation exercise.

Calling the Women's Reservation Bill a 'dream' of the Congress party, Shivakumar, nevertheless, said that amending the Constitution necessitated taking everyone into confidence.

"It was the Congress that strove for the bill. But the BJP government did not take a decision on the bill at the right time. India is a democratic country where Hitler-style governance has no place," Shivakumar told reporters.

Queried about the protests staged by the BJP condemning the opposition, Shivakumar said, "They are the ones who brought the bill despite knowing very well that it would be defeated. They are anti-women. Are we not representatives in a democracy? Were they not elected by the people? They should have held discussions. The Women's Reservation Bill is not their property. It belongs to the nation."

Shivakumar also took exception to the Centre tabling the bill when elections were underway.

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8 people drown in Cauvery in separate incidents

MYSURU, DHNS

As many as 8 people, in separate incidents, have drowned in River Cauvery in K R Nagar and Periyapatna taluks of Mysuru district on Sunday.

Six people, including two children, drowned in River Cauvery near Arkeshwara temple in K R Nagar taluk.

The incident occurred when they had come to attend the Urus at Hazrat Khader Lingavali Dargah, at around 3 pm.

The deceased were identified as Umer (7) from Udaygiri in Mysuru; Nehaan (20) from Bannur in Mysuru district; Syed Fathima (38) from Ooty; Yaasin (23), Haima (13) from Bengaluru and Afiya (20).

According to Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) C Mallik, a group of about 20 people had gone to the Dargah. They got into the water to play before having lunch. While they were sitting on the embankment (Katte), a child fell into the water. Without knowing the depth, nine people, one after the other, fell into the river. Of them, only three were rescued, the ASP added.

The rescued are - Salma Banu, 50, from K R Nagar; Asiya, 20, from Udaygiri; and Zubeda, 40, from Bannur - who were rushed to hospitals in Mysuru for further treatment.

Local people, fishermen and personnel of the department of fire and emergency services retrieved the bodies, which were shifted to K R Nagar government hospital for autopsy. Heart-wrenching scenes were witnessed at the government hospital, as the relatives grieved over the loss of their kin.

SP Mallikarjun Baladandi and others rushed to the spot and monitored the process.

K R Nagar MLA D Ravishankar announced the government's compensation of Rs 5 lakh each to the victims and Rs 50,000 from his personal capacity.

Watery grave

Two people met watery grave in River Cauvery at Ranigate in Periyapatna taluk.

The deceased were identified as Ganesh (22) and Imran (28).

The incident occurred when the four people, including Karthik and Sohail, went to swim in the river at around 2 pm. It is said that Ganesh and Imran drowned after being caught in a whirlpool.

Personnel from department of fire and emergency services retrieved the body of Ganesh, while the body of Imran is yet to be traced.

Bylakuppe police have registered a case.

TO KEEP TRACK

Radio collar is installed on a wild elephant at Basura village in Belur taluk of Hassan district on Sunday.

US delegation heads...

Iran, From Page 1

Iran's speaker of parliament and senior negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf had insisted as recently as Saturday night that the two sides were "still far from the final discussion".

Iran and the US, along with Israel, are just three days away from the end of the two-week ceasefire that halted the war.

There has so far been only a single, 21-hour negotiating session held in Islamabad on April 11 that ended inconclusively, though groundwork for fresh talks continued afterwards.

In spite of the uncertainty, security was visibly stepped up in Islamabad on Sunday in anticipation of new talks.

Authorities announced road closures and traffic restrictions across the city, as well as in neighbouring Rawalpindi.

3 of a family among 4 killed in serial accident

MARIYAMMANAHALLI (VIJAYANAGAR DISTRICT), DHNS: Three members of a family among four were killed and at least 20 people suffered injuries in a serial accident involving two lorries, an RTC bus, a car and two bikes near BMM Ispat factory on the Mariyammanahalli-Danapur stretch of National Highway 50 near Hosapete on Sunday.

The deceased are Sujata (34), who was serving as guest teacher at the government higher primary school at Kitnur village of Hagaribommanahalli taluk, her brother Kotresh (28) and father Nagappa (58). The fourth victim was identified as H Durugappa (55) of Thimmlapur village.

Sujata's husband Jambanna has been shifted to the SDM Hospital in Dharwad for treatment. The family of four along with two others were going on two bikes to Kampli to see a girl for Kotresh for marriage.

At least 20 passengers of the bus sustained injuries in the mishap. Of which, six passengers suffered critical injuries and were rushed to Koppal district hospital while the remaining injured have been admitted to Hosapete government hospital.

According to the police, a speeding garlic-laden lorry going from Delhi to Bengaluru hit a car and a lorry before ramming into a Chitradurga-bound RTC bus. The lorry then crashed into the bikes before falling into a roadside ditch.

The serial accident badly affected the traffic flow on the busy highway with vehicles lining up for 2 to 3 km on either side.

More than 50 police personnel deployed at the accident site ensured the smooth movement of traffic after three hours of struggle.

Superintendent of Police S Jahnavi, Additional SP Manjunath, DySP Mallesh Doddamani, PI Vikas Lamani and staff visited the accident spot.

K'taka outlines plan to become...

Pulse, from Page 1

"The goal is to save our foreign exchange and to insulate our domestic markets from global price volatility," said Y S Patil, Commissioner of Agriculture. He emphasised that by promoting inter-cropping in non-traditional areas like Haveri, Chitradurga and Tumakuru, the state is creating a buffer against global supply shocks.

Director of Agriculture, G T Putra, noted the department is also distributing free seed mini-kits to small farmers to encourage intercropping with maize, ragi and groundnut.

"This ensures nutritional security at the household level while naturally expanding the cultivation footprint without displacing other food crops," he added.

With 100% procurement via NAFED (National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India) and NCCF (National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India) is guaranteed for tur, urad and masur, the state expects a steady rise in farmer participation, paving the way for a protein-secure and self-reliant India.

Gold's golden run on but Indians tweak buying strategy

Gold, from Page 1

"While jewellery buying remains rooted in tradition, consumer behaviour has become value-conscious. A key shift is financialisation of purchases, with consumers viewing jewellery as both adornment & investment—making purity, transparency, and BIS hallmarking essential," said Kirit Bhansali, Chairman, Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council.

This year's Akshaya Tritiya unfolded under significant price pressure, with gold rising to around Rs 1.55 lakh per 10 grams in 2026 versus about Rs 95,000 in 2025—a nearly 60% jump — that has sharply reduced purchasing power. Yet demand remains culturally anchored, even as consumers become more selective.

"The defining characteristic of 2026 is a pronounced shift toward investment-grade formats—coins, bars, and lighter jewellery that doubles as portable wealth. Buyers are also exploring lightweight jewellery and lab-grown diamond pieces. Mechanisms like gold rate-protection pre-bookings and making-charge waivers are gaining traction," said Renisha Chainani, Head of Research at Augmont.

Ricky Vasandani, CEO and Co-founder, Solitario, said traditional gold continues to reflect a "value over volume" trend, while lab-grown diamonds are gaining momentum.

"Today's consumers are increasingly drawn to pieces that go beyond tradition, reflecting individuality and enduring value," said Eshwar Surana, Managing Director, Raj Diamonds.

Conversely, strengthening investment demand now accounts for nearly 40% of overall consumption. Buyers are increasingly turning to Gold ETFs, digital gold and systematic purchases instead of lump-sum buying. According to a report by Kotak Securities, Gold ETFs in India saw continued inflows in March 2026 for the 11th straight month, but at a slower pace. Net inflows were $176.6 million, adding 1.1 tonnes, as investors booked profits after earlier gains.

"Even amid concerns over price volatility, there is steady demand for gold coins, bars and jewellery. Consumers continue to view gold as an investment," said Paul Alukkas, Managing Director of Jos Alukkas.

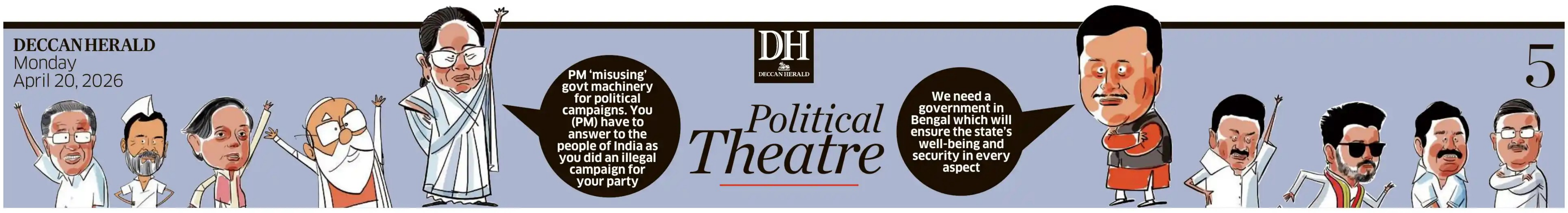
"While the investment aspect of gold remains important, there is a clear shift towards balancing investment with everyday usability and affordability," said Pawan Gupta, Chairperson of PP Jewellers.

WGC data shows that listed jewellery retailers posted revenue growth of 32-124% in Q1 2026, driven by weddings and steady demand. In 2025, however, total gold demand fell 11% to 710.9 tonnes, though value surged to around Rs 7.5 lakh crore due to higher prices. "We saw positive festive demand in both volume and value terms last year, despite elevated gold prices," said Saumen Bhaumik, Managing Director, CaratLane.

Over the past year, gold has risen over 60%, supported by geopolitical uncertainty, central bank buying and strong investment flows. Kotak Securities notes that consumption is gradually shifting toward investment behaviour.

Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst — Commodities at HDFC Securities, said, "Gold demand is expected to remain weak due to elevated prices... However, the cultural importance of Akshaya Tritiya will continue to support baseline demand." He highlighted a broader shift toward gold as an investment.

"We are seeing an increasing number of consumers opt for gold exchange," mentioned Sandeep Kohli, CEO, Indriya - Aditya Birla Jewellery.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'We crushed BJP's attempts to reduce south's political representation'

MK Stalin has crisscrossed Tamil Nadu on the campaign trail since March 31. The chief minister steps off his van to address crowds, and spends mornings at markets gauging the election pulse—hoping to make history by returning the DMK to power for a consecutive second term, the first since 1972. In an interview with *DH*'s **E T B Sivapriyan**, Stalin discussed his government's performance, the BJP, AIADMK, delimitation, and why he framed the April 23 elections as Tamil Nadu versus the NDA. Excerpts:

You have projected the 2026 Assembly elections as a battle between Tamil Nadu and the NDA. Does this mean you are acknowledging the BJP's growth in Tamil Nadu, or merely tapping into the anti-BJP sentiments prevailing in the state for votes?

The BJP has not grown in Tamil Nadu; it can never grow here. Frustrated that it cannot come to power, the BJP is riding on the back of the AIADMK to capture power through the back door. We have taken up the 'TN vs NDA' campaign only to tear off the BJP's AIADMK mask.

The BJP-led Union government is trying to snatch the political rights of southern states. We stood firm and crushed its attempts to reduce our political representation. But it was the AIADMK that stabbed the people of Tamil Nadu in the back by supporting the move. That is why we have framed this election as Tamil Nadu vs Delhi.

The DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance has won three consecutive general elections. Yet you are expanding the alliance. Is this because you want to neutralise anti-incumbency votes against your government, or because the contest has turned into a four-cornered one?

We have won every election since 2019 with massive public support, and the five-year Dravidian model of governance has only strengthened it. There is a pro-incumbency wave in Tamil Nadu, and we will confidently secure over 200 seats.

The AIADMK has cobbled together a coalition. Why do you describe the contest as multi-cornered? Who are the principal contenders?

I would like to correct you — they are not a strong alliance. They have been repeatedly rejected by the people. As I have already said, this election pits the team protecting Tamil Nadu's rights and future against the Delhi team trying to turn everyone into puppets.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP leaders speak of a double-engine sarkar in Tamil Nadu. Even AIADMK leaders talk about it.

Tamil Nadu already has a super-fast engine. It has posted growth that even so-called double-engine states have never achieved.

TAMIL NADU
Assembly Poll

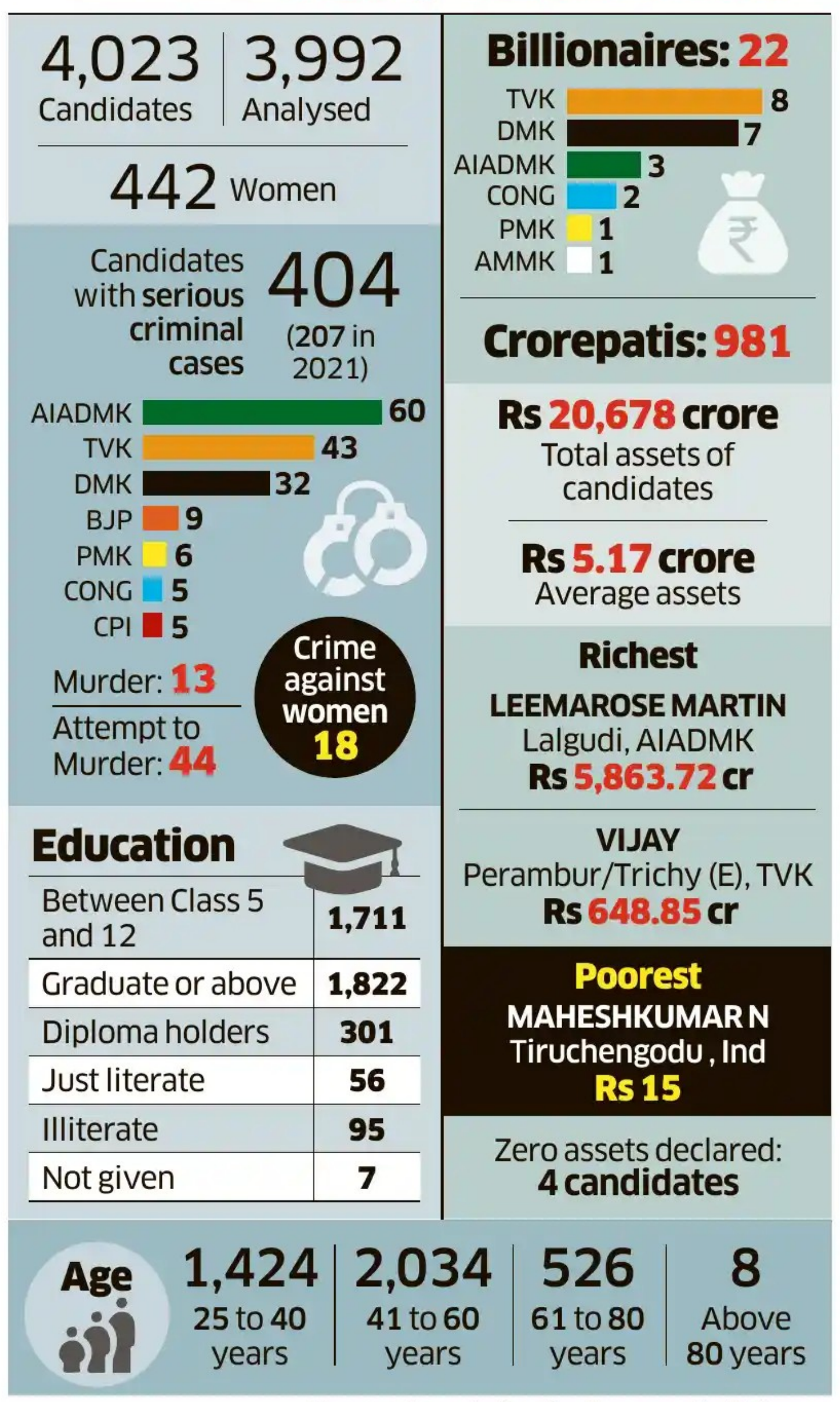
Despite your government's success in several sectors, Opposition parties allege that you have not fulfilled several promises made in the run-up to the 2021 election.

Which Opposition is saying that? Is it the BJP, which came to power in 2014 by cheating people with the promise of transferring Rs 15 lakh into every citizen's bank account? Or the AIADMK, which did not even fulfil 10% of the promises it made in 2016? We have implemented schemes not only from our manifesto but also those that were never promised. No government in the past has delivered as much as ours.

The ED and other central agencies have filed cases against your Cabinet colleagues. Is it fair to view them only through the prism of the BJP's vendetta politics?

It is not only the DMK that says the ED acts at the whims and fancies of the BJP; courts themselves have passed strictures against the agency. Many politicians in the north who were investigated by the ED have been declared clean after joining the BJP's washing machine. Either the cases against them have been dropped, or they are now called saints. People see the ED as one of the BJP's wings, with its only job being to crush the Opposition.

Tamil Nadu: Money & Muscle Power



4,023	3,992
Candidates	Analysed

442 Women

Candidates with serious criminal cases 404 (207 in 2021)

Party	Candidates with serious criminal cases
AIADMK	60
TVK	43
DMK	32
BJP	9
PMK	6
CONG	5
CPI	5

Murder: 13

Attempt to Murder: 44

Crime against women 18

Billionaires: 22

Party	Billionaires
TVK	8
DMK	7
AIADMK	3
CONG	2
PMK	1
AMMK	1

Crorepatis: 981

Rs 20,678 crore
Total assets of candidates

Rs 5.17 crore
Average assets

Richest
LEEMAROSE MARTIN
Lalgudi, AIADMK
Rs 5,863.72 cr

VIJAY
Perambur/Trichy (E), TVK
Rs 648.85 cr

Poorest
MAHESHKUMAR N
Tiruchengodu , Ind
Rs 15

Zero assets declared:
4 candidates

Education

Education	Candidates
Between Class 5 and 12	1,711
Graduate or above	1,822
Diploma holders	301
Just literate	56
Illiterate	95
Not given	7

Age

1,424	2,034	526	8
25 to 40 years	41 to 60 years	61 to 80 years	Above 80 years

Source: Association for Democratic Reforms

Poll vault

Religious rounds
On Sunday morning, priests from several churches across the state met Chief Minister MK Stalin, ostensibly to congratulate him for defeating the bill linked to delimitation in Parliament. They pledged support for the DMK. In the evening, TVK chief Vijay visited a church in Tiruchirapalli East to offer prayers. Vijay is contesting from the seat, which has a significant minority population, especially Christians. He also visited a mosque and a temple.

E T B SIVAPRIYAN, CHENNAI

Meet the leader

Shankar Ghosh
BJP
Siliguri

Siliguri MLA Shankar Ghosh is considered one of the BJP's key faces in north Bengal. He served as the party's chief whip in the Assembly and is known for his oratory skills, legislative interventions and organisational coordination. A former CPM leader, he joined the BJP ahead of the 2021 Assembly elections and defeated Trinamool Congress candidate Om Prakash Mishra from the Siliguri constituency by a margin of over 35,000 votes. A doctorate in microbiology, Ghosh has been active on issues related to development and governance, particularly in north Bengal.

Trivia
Mamata Banerjee is the first Bengali woman to become the chief minister of West Bengal. However, the first Bengali woman to hold the office of chief minister was Sucheta Kriplani (née Majumdar), who took office as Uttar Pradesh's chief minister in 1963. A freedom fighter and member of the Constituent Assembly, she was married to Gandhian socialist JB Kripalani.

PM slams TMC's 'syndicate regime'

Targets Mamata govt over corruption, women's bill

KALYAN RAY
PURULIA, DHNS

PM Narendra Modi tries 'jhalmuri' in Jhargram. PTI

Days before the first round of polling in the West Bengal Assembly election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday once again launched scathing attacks on the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government, vowing to uproot the "syndicate regime" if the BJP comes to power.

WEST BENGAL
Assembly Poll

"The TMC syndicate has captured tribal land and is running the illegal quarrying business," Modi said at a rally at Roybaghini ground near the Purulia Sainik School. He also addressed three other rallies in Bankura, Jhargram and Medinipur districts.

Modi accused TMC ministers of corruption in the teacher recruitment process and deceiving thousands of youths. "In TMC's reign of jungle rule, no work gets done without a cut," he alleged.

"That's why the industry is suffering here. Factories don't come out of fear. Factories come with trust; factories run on trust. Investment follows trust."

On the syndicate regime, he said, "The TMC syndicate controls the markets and cold storage. The BJP will uproot this syndicate's control."

Two days after the BJP government failed to secure passage of a constitutional amendment linked to delimitation and the early implementation of 33% women's reservation in Parliament and Assemblies, the PM blamed the TMC for the debacle in the Lok Sabha. "The TMC didn't want women in Parliament. It opposed the women's reservation bill. You must punish the TMC for this when you vote," he said.

At the end of his rally in Jhargram, Modi stopped at a small puffed-rice shop and bought a pack of jhalmuri, Bengal's staple snack. He paid Rs 10 to the shop owners, ate a few bites, shared some with people nearby, and later posted a video of the moment on social media.

'Unprecedented' security forces' meet for Bengal elections

KOLKATA, DHNS: The top brass of the central paramilitary forces held an unprecedented meeting in Kolkata on Sunday to discuss security arrangements for the Assembly elections in West Bengal, where polling will be held in two phases on April 23 and April 29.

The chiefs of the CRPF, BSF, CISF, SSB and ITBP met in the city two days after the I-T Department raided the houses of TMC leaders, including a party candidate.

The senior officers discussed security arrangements, with a particular focus on the use of technology, to ensure free and fair elections, according to sources.

The Election Commission will deploy 2,407 companies of paramilitary forces during the first phase of voting when 152 constituencies in 16 of the 23 districts go to polls. A large number of armoured vehicles have also been deployed.

ED arrest

The Enforcement Directorate arrested Joy Kamdar, a businessman, on Sunday, in connection with a money laundering case. The agency also searched DCP Shantanu Sinha Biswas' house.

Referring to the ED raid at Biswas' house, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said at a rally in Hooghly, "My security officer has been under raid... Do you believe you can win Bengal by getting me killed?"

I-PAC halts Bengal ops for 20 days over 'legal issues'

DH EXCLUSIVE

AMRITA MADHUKALYA
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Against the backdrop of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducting searches at locations linked to I-PAC, the political consultancy agency of the Trinamool Congress (TMC), has suspended its operations in the state.

The I-PAC authorities made the announcement through emails sent to its employees late on Saturday. "In view of certain legal issues, management has decided to pause operations in West Bengal with immediate effect," the email stated.

The team has been told by the HR department that they should avail a 20-day leave, and that they will review the situation by May 11, *DH* has learnt.

"We fully respect the law of the land, are cooperating with the process and are certain that justice will take its due course ... by May 11, we will regroup, review the situation, and decide the next steps," the communication stated.

Addressing an election rally in Tarakeswar, Mamata Banerjee, without taking the firm's name, declared that if employees were forced out of their jobs because of the ongoing pressure, her party would absorb them.

"They raid us through the ED every day. Suddenly, during elections, they remembered all this? They are telling those who work for our party to leave West Bengal. They have 50 organisations. We have only one," Banerjee said.

"If they are threatened, they will join us. We will give them jobs. I will not allow even one boy to lose his job. I spoke to Abhishek before coming here," she added. Without naming the BJP directly, the CM alleged that a "deep conspiracy" was underway to disrupt the TMC's election preparations.

The I-PAC has, however, not reacted to the development. An email sent to the consultancy and one of its directors by *DH* remains unanswered.

EMOTIONAL CONNECT

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) chief Vijay interacts with a child with disability during a campaign ahead of the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, in Tiruchirappalli, on Sunday. PTI

A Left campaign at Bandwan Assembly constituency in Purulia district, West Bengal. The area has a sizeable Adivasi population and was once an active Maoist territory. DH PHOTO/KALYAN RAY

Smooth sailing ahead for Sunetra?

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
MUMBAI, DHNS

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar.

In Baramati, elections are a referendum on the Pawars. From Sharad Pawar to Ajit Pawar, the family has defined the constituency's identity for decades in the national political landscape.

In this by-election, the central question remains: can anyone truly challenge the Pawar stronghold?

Nestled in the Deccan Plateau, the bustling town of Baramati in Pune district was once drought-prone. Today, it is known for its agriculture, horticulture, cooperatives, dairies, industries, education and overall development — and, of course, the Pawar family.

Baramati is located around 100 km from Pune and about 250 km from Mumbai.

The by-election was necessitated by the untimely demise of Maharashtra's then Deputy Chief Minister and NCP president Ajit Pawar (66), popularly known as Ajit Dada.

Three days later, wife Sunetra Pawar (62), then a Rajya Sabha member, was elected leader of the NCP legislature party and sworn in as Deputy Chief Minister.

Altogether, 23 candidates are in the fray for the April 23 bypoll. The contest saw a late withdrawal by Congress candidate Akash More — a lawyer-politician and son of former MLC Vijayrao More.

Among the independents are Karuna Munde, estranged first wife of NCP leader Dhananjay Munde, and Abhijeet Bichukale, a controversial figure from Satara district.

Sunetra enjoys support across political lines. The ruling Maha Yuti alliance — comprising BJP and the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena — is backing her candidature. From the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) has also extended support, citing long-standing ties between the families.

Meanwhile, NCP(SP) has maintained from the outset that it will not field a candidate in the by-election.

The campaign has also highlighted visible family unity. NCP(SP) MLA Rohit Pawar and party leader Yugendra Pawar — who had contested against Ajit Pawar in the 2024 election — are now campaigning for Sunetra.

Her sons, Rajya Sabha MP Parth Pawar and Jay Pawar, are also actively canvassing in the villages.

Clarifying his stand, Rohit said: "We, as members of the Pawar family, are campaigning for Sunetra Kaki in Baramati — not as representatives of the BJP-led Maha Yuti."

Raigad MP and Maharashtra NCP president Sunil Tatkare expressed confidence, stating the election would see a record turnout and a record victory margin.

His daughter, Maharashtra Women and Child Development Minister Aditi Tatkare, went a step further, backing Sunetra Pawar as a potential chief ministerial candidate. "If that happens, she would become Maharashtra's first woman Chief Minister," she said.

During the campaign, emotional connect remains a key factor, with residents frequently recalling Ajit Pawar.

"It has been two months since Ajit Dada left us, but I feel he is still with us. I will strive to carry forward his legacy through hard work. Every breath of Ajit Dada was for Baramati, and he took his last breath here," Sunetra had said after filing her nomination on April 6.

EC cracks down on over 11,000 'unlawful' social media posts

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Action has been taken against over 11,000 social media posts or URLs, including seeking the removal of content and filing FIRs, in connection with unlawful claims made during the poll season, the Election Commission said.

Separately, 3,23,099 complaints have been lodged using the C-Vigil App since March 15. Of these complaints, 3,10,393 or 96.01% were resolved within the stipulated time period of 100 minutes.

The EC has reiterated that all stakeholders shall ensure responsible and ethical use of social media and digital platforms, in compliance with the Information Technology Act, 2000; IT Rules, 2021; and the Model Code of Conduct.

It had also warned that any misleading or unlawful AI-generated or manipulated content shall be acted upon within 3 hours of being brought to notice of the social media platforms.

Social media content, such as posts that violate the MCC, disrupt or have the potential to disrupt law and order, or spread false narratives about polling processes or machinery, is monitored and acted upon by the state IT nodal officers concerned, designated under the IT Act.

Since the announcement of elections on March 15, the EC said that over 11,000 such social media posts/URLs have been identified and acted upon, including removal of content, FIR, clarifications and rebuttals.

AI content

Parties, candidates and campaign representatives are required to ensure that any synthetically generated or AI-altered content used for campaigning is clearly labelled as "AI-Generated", "Digitally Enhanced" or "Synthetic Content", along with disclosure of the originating entity, to maintain transparency and voter trust, it said.

DECCAN HERALD
ESTABLISHED 1948

Monsoon deficit casts a shadow over India

The possibility that India will see a below-par monsoon this year, after two years of above-normal rainfall, should be a cause for concern. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted an 8% deficit in its April forecast for the year. Private forecaster Skymet has also reported that the monsoon season from June to September will see below normal rainfall. The main reason for the shortfall is the possibility of El Niño, a climate phenomenon in the Central Pacific Ocean. It involves unusual heating of the ocean's surface waters, which weakens the movement of cloud-carrying winds and disrupts normal monsoon activity. The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) has also reported that this year will be a super El Niño year. The IMD expects that the Indian Ocean Dipole, another climate phenomenon relating to ocean temperatures, may moderate the impact of El Niño. But El Niño years have mostly been poor monsoon years, and India should, therefore, be prepared for a deficient monsoon.

There is a margin of 5% in the IMD forecasts. There is also a difference of 2% in the quantum of rainfall between the two forecasts. But these may not make any substantial difference. Credit rating agencies have issued notes of caution about agriculture, the sector most hit by a deficient monsoon. The caution comes on top of concerns over the disruption of fertiliser and fuel supply caused by the war in West Asia. Agriculture's share in GDP has declined by about 8% over the last two decades. That is because of the relatively higher growth of other sectors, a decline in the area under cultivation and a fall in productivity. But agriculture is still the mainstay of the rural sector and provides livelihood to the largest segment of the population. Any weakening of the sector will hurt rural incomes and demand and have a cascading effect on other sectors. Rural employment will be affected, especially because the MGNREGA has been weakened.

> **Both the Union and state governments should start planning for a below-normal monsoon**

Both the Union and state governments should start planning for a below-normal monsoon. Farmers should be counselled about crops that need less water, and seeds of such crops, along with adequate quantities of fertilisers, should be stocked. Plans should be made for optimum use of water and efficient management of reservoir levels. A deficient monsoon will affect drinking water supplies to cities, towns and even villages. The industrial sector will also be affected. Soaring temperatures and a shortage of rain will affect the health sector. Climate change is likely to aggravate the situation. Preparations should be made to meet contingencies in all these sectors.

Excise gains should not override public health

About two decades ago, Bharatinagar MLA N Rajanna narrated an unusual complaint on the floor of the Assembly: a drunk man accosted him during an early-morning walk to protest that bars were opening too late. It was a curious snapshot of a society negotiating its relationship with liquor. Today, that anecdote reads more like a warning unheeded. If Rajajinagar MLA S Suresh Kumar's recent observations are any indication, the state has shown remarkable 'improvement' in addressing that old grievance. Bars opening at 6.30 am – or even earlier – are no longer isolated violations but part of a pattern. Suresh Kumar's morning walks have revealed a troubling normalisation: people beginning their day not with coffee or tea but with a drink. In residential areas, this raises concerns about safety, public order, and the social environment in which children grow up.

Two factors underpin this drift. The first is fiscal. Karnataka's dependence on excise revenue has increased significantly, with a target of Rs 45,000 crore for 2026-2027. This creates implicit pressure on vendors to push sales, often by stretching – or ignoring – regulatory boundaries. The second is administrative complicity. Excise officials and the police, empowered to enforce the law, too often appear to look the other way. This reality contradicts the government's stated commitments. In his Budget, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah sought to distinguish between revenue generation and harm mitigation, assigning the health department the task of promoting responsible drinking and addressing the negative externalities of alcohol consumption. Awareness campaigns and expanded de-addiction services were promised. However, these promises risk being rendered ineffective if the basic regulatory framework is not enforced. Public health messaging cannot coexist with a marketplace that incentivises consumption at dawn. The irony is sharper still when one considers the existence of the Karnataka State Temperance Board, established in 1976 to discourage alcohol abuse and promote moderation. Today, it is largely invisible, its mandate eclipsed by the state's growing reliance on excise income.

> **The social costs of harmful alcohol consumption can be severe. Karnataka must step up its regulation**

At its core, this is a question of governance. The state has the right to tax, and excise revenue funds are essential for welfare and infrastructure. But that right cannot override its duty to protect public health and social order. Revenue cannot become an end in itself. Without firm regulation and institutional accountability, the state is effectively borrowing against its future; the short-term fiscal gain will eventually be eclipsed by the long-term cost to the health, safety, and welfare of families. In the end, the damage will outlast revenue.

CHOKEPOINT LIMITS

Tech denial strategy needs a rethink

Export controls sometimes may inadvertently accelerate the very capability-building they were designed to prevent

ARINDAM GOSWAMI

It is almost ironic to see the world's most powerful economies using trade as a weapon. The United States bans advanced chips from reaching China. In response, China cuts off exports of gallium and germanium. The US restricts drone components, but China still leads the drone supply chain.

The Joe Biden administration created complex rules for AI diffusion, which the Donald Trump administration later rolled back. Each side keeps trying to block the other, but those being denied usually find a way around it.

This is a pattern with a structure that deserves attention, especially since most technology-denial strategies today rely on assumptions that the evidence does not support.

In a recent paper published on technology-denial regimes, this author introduced two frameworks to explain why these situations keep repeating. The first examines denial from the perspective of the country imposing it, weighing supply-chain control against coalition-building. The second looks at the targeted country's ability to adapt, focusing on its own R&D strength and the partnerships it can form.

The first mistaken belief behind most denial regimes is that controlling supply means controlling outcomes. For a denial regime to work, two things must happen simultaneously: the imposing country needs enough supply chain control to make workarounds difficult, and it must bring enough countries on board to block alternative routes.

When both conditions are met, you get something like an 'iron gate' - similar to how the Nuclear Suppliers Group kept nuclear-weapons technology tightly controlled for decades. If only one condition is met, the barrier is far weaker.

China's export controls on gallium and germanium illustrate this clearly.

China produces roughly 99% of the world's primary gallium, which looks like total dominance. But the controls were less effective than Beijing expected. The US found new suppliers in Canada, Japan, and Germany. The US's gallium use not only held steady during the restrictions, it even grew slightly. Prices rose, but higher prices without a drop in consumption are only a partial victory. China had supply chain control but lacked international support, putting it in the 'fragile bloc': strong on paper, weak in practice.

Applying the same logic to the US semiconductor export controls raises harder questions. The restrictions coordinated with the Netherlands and Japan around ASML's EUV lithography equipment are more sophisticated and closer to a genuine 'iron gate'. But semiconductors differ from nuclear technology: they are not just military assets. They underpin almost every part of the modern economy, which makes it harder to hold the coalition together as the economic costs mount for the allies supposed to sustain these controls.

The second mistaken assumption concerns how well the targeted country adapts. Denial regimes typically assume the target will simply absorb the blow. Countries with strong domestic research and development and alternative partnerships—or 'resilient transformers'—often emerge stronger. China is the clearest example. It has top research institutions, a massive domestic market that can sustain local alternatives, and deepening ties with countries outside the Western tech bloc. This is very different from a country like North Korea, which has neither domestic capability nor willing partners. The right denial strategy depends entirely on which category the target falls into.

DeepSeek made this point sharply. A Chinese AI lab produced a frontier model using far less compute than Western equivalents, without relying on the most advanced Nvidia chips. Their efficiency gains suggested that restricting hardware access may actually be pushing Chinese AI development toward more resilient methods, not weaker ones. The US export controls may have inadvertently accelerated the very capability-building they were designed to prevent.

The drone industry follows a similar arc. Restrictions on DJI have not reduced its global dominance. Instead, allied militaries and commercial users have found workarounds, settled for inferior alternatives, or quietly continued using DJI equipment despite the bans. Ukraine's battlefield use of Chinese-made drone components even caused a minor diplomatic headache. The denial regime created disruption but failed to generate credible alternatives fast enough to matter.

This is where the framework becomes practically useful. Before launching a denial regime, a country should answer two questions. First: Do we control enough of the supply chain, and can we assemble a coalition that genuinely blocks the target's options? If not, expect leakage through third countries.

Second: How capable is the target of adapting? If its adaptive capacity is high, a focused and time-limited approach on the most critical chokepoints will outperform a broad ban that simply gives the target years to develop the skills you wanted to deny it.

The Biden administration's AI diffusion rules ran into exactly this problem. They were complicated, drew strong objections from allies who felt unfairly ranked, and were nearly impossible to enforce given how flexible cloud computing is. The Trump administration's revision of those rules confirmed the unsustainability of the original framework.

Yet the core challenge remains: How do you control access to a technology that is predominantly software, evolves rapidly, and is being open-sourced by private companies beyond any government's reach?

The answer is that you probably cannot control it fully. You can slow things down at specific chokepoints, buy time to build local alternatives, and avoid sprawling denial regimes that end up stimulating exactly the innovation you hoped to suppress. The history of technology-denial is largely a history of strategic overreach — the assumption that blocking access would permanently weaken a rival, only for that rival to emerge more self-reliant and more competitive.

The real question was never whether to deny; it was what to deny, to whom, and for how long, before those denied simply build their own tools.

(The writer is a research analyst in the High-Tech Geopolitics Programme at the Takshashila Institution)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

The quiet love in women's friendships

What draws women together is their shared realities and struggles

MAHIMA ROSELIN VARGHESE

The idea that women can share a deep, sustaining bond without jealousy or competition often seems like a myth—especially in soaps on Indian television that thrive on narratives built around the trope of women who are mean, jealous, and given to gossip.

Women may not connect immediately after a first meeting. But with time and trust, short messages turn into long conversations, lengthy voice notes, and hours of video calls. These bonds are forged for life.

Back in my school days, I used to write letters. I still have some of them tucked away in my trunk box as keepsakes. We poured our hearts out, writing unabashedly about our quotidian routines and venting our feelings. But letter writing wasn't always that easy; in fact, it took an unlikely turn.

A friend of mine once wrote a letter and sent it through a classmate. A boy who held a personal vendetta against her saw the opportunity and spread the rumour that it was a love letter. The story quickly caught on, reaching the staffroom and the principal's office, and soon slipped out of her control.

No matter how much she pleaded, no one believed her. Her parents were summoned to the principal's office. In a small-town school community, it seemed unfathomable that girls could write letters to one another out of pure friendship. All this while, I remained oblivious to the incident, hurt by her silence and the absence of letters. It was only years later, after we reconnected—thanks to social media—that I learned about the entire conundrum surrounding our letter-writing saga.

For girls and women, maintaining friendships wasn't easy; it was hindered by societal restrictions, and in many small towns, this remains unchanged even today. During my teenage years, one wouldn't find a single girl loitering in public playgrounds, while young boys routinely spent their evenings after school on local grounds. That said, careers and travels have opened up opportunities for women. They now have greater access to spaces where they can connect with like-minded individuals through open mics, community reading spaces, workshops, or even women-only travel groups, not to mention the recently noted women-only divorcee group from Kerala that gained BBC attention.

What draws women together is their shared realities and struggles. Despite living in different cities or countries, women hold space for their best female friends—be it for relationship advice, toxic workspaces, or family trauma. These friendships offer a safe space to be vulnerable, without the fear of being misunderstood.

For many women, their long-cherished friendships fade as they shrink themselves into their homes, submitting to the unending needs of their families. When middle age hits, and children outgrow their need for constant care, these friendships, if sustained, can continue to hold a safe and loving space.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Defeat for the Bills, victory for democracy

The defeat of the Constitution amendment Bill on delimitation for early implementation of a 33% women's quota in Lok Sabha on Friday, after the Modi government failed to secure the required two-thirds majority, is a positive sign for democracy. It appears as if the Union government itself designed the defeat in its hurry to force the passage. The Modi government should introspect, as it was wrong to attempt to link the women's reservation Bill with the delimitation Bill, 2026. The attempt to get the Bills passed appeared as if the government planned to penalise southern states for better governance. All said and done, this defeat is a resounding victory for democracy.

M Basavaraj, Davanagere

Model code violation

Apropos 'Modi slams 'anti-women' Congress after Bill defeat' (Apr 19), in his 29-minute address to the nation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi repeatedly chastised the Opposition for defeating the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill in Lok Sabha. With the elections underway in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, he should have refrained from using offensive language against the Opposition. Apologising to women appeared to be a clever attempt to emotionally charge the women voters in the two states. The model code of conduct bars the Prime Minister from using government mass media during the election period to further his party's electoral prospects.

Kamal Laddha, Bengaluru

Long-term water plan

Apropos 'Water levels in Karnataka's 14 reservoirs drop to 36%' (Apr 17), the drop in water levels in the reservoirs should serve as an early warning for the State to prepare a long-term contingency plan with better storage and distribution facilities to meet water needs in summer.

A K Shariff, Mysuru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

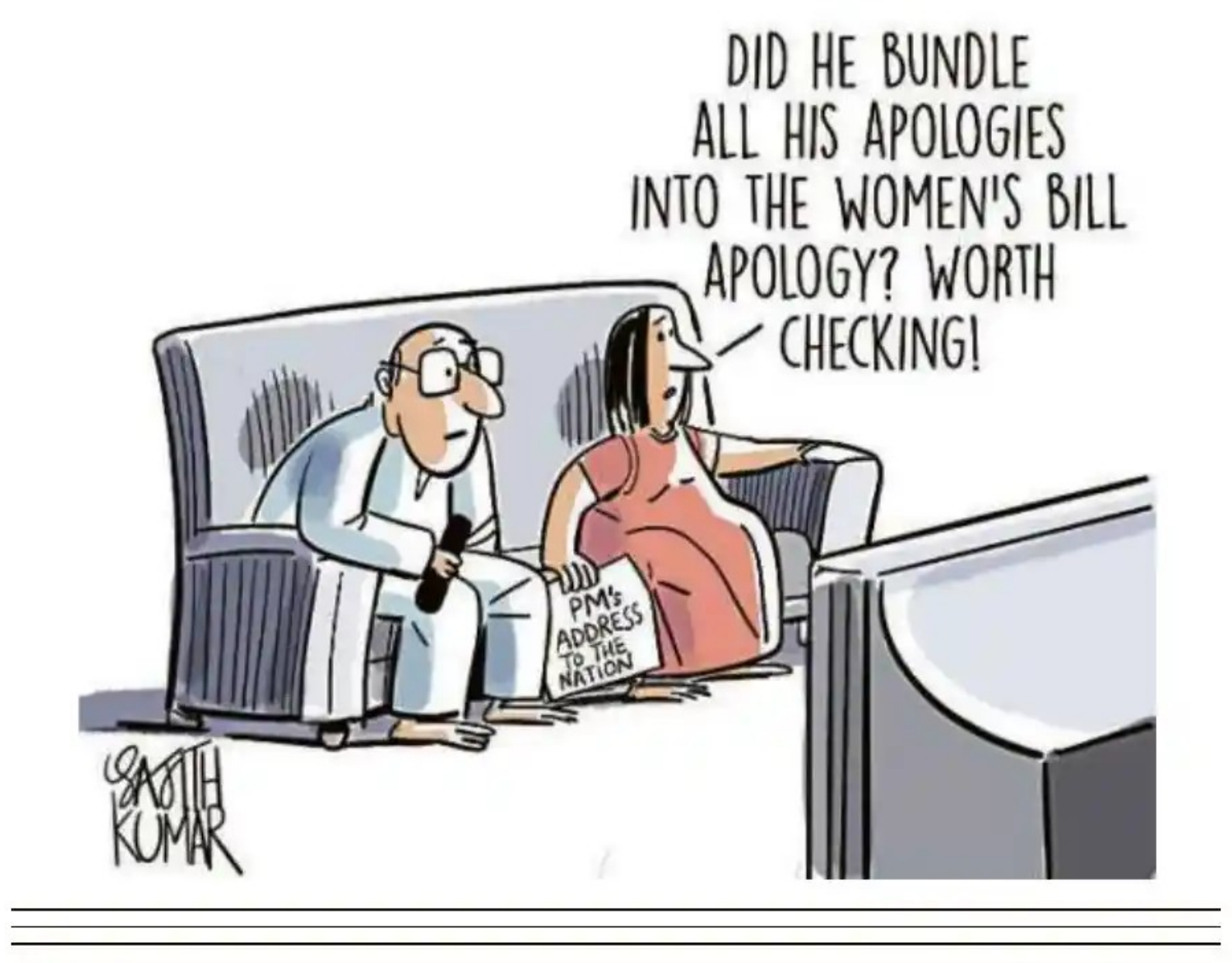
The DMK, after initially expressing support for key Constitutional Amendment Bills, subsequently took a U-turn, thereby depriving southern states of a significant and beneficial opportunity.

H D Kumaraswamy, Union Minister

Into the echo chamber of his own mind, he was always able to find a justification for the most terrible actions.

Una McCormack

TO BE PRECISE


DID HE BUNDLE ALL HIS APOLOGIES INTO THE WOMEN'S BILL APOLOGY? WORTH CHECKING!
PM's ADDRESS TO THE NATION
SAJITH KUMAR

IN PERSPECTIVE

Leadership for a more liveable city

As civic polls approach, the central question is not just who wins, but who will take ownership of solving Bengaluru's problems

SANTOSH NARGUND AND SARISH TRIPATHI

Bengaluru has gone over five and a half years without an elected city government, resulting in prolonged bureaucratic rule under direct State control. After years of political manoeuvring, administrative restructuring, and litigation — including a standoff between the State Election Commission and the government — Bengalureans may finally elect their local representatives by June.

The city has witnessed extraordinary growth over the past decade, with the population increasing by nearly 50%. The Bengaluru Urban district's GDP has risen from Rs 2.69 lakh-crore in 2015-2016 to nearly Rs 10 lakh-crore in 2023-2024, while per capita income has nearly tripled to Rs 7.39 lakh.

The Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024, introduces a new structure: five city corporations under an integrated metropolitan body, the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA). The number of wards has increased from 198 to 369 (including 176 seats reserved for women), reducing the average population per ward to about 40,000-50,000 — far lower than in Mumbai or Delhi. In theory, this should bring governance closer to citizens.

However, even as the city expands in scale and ambition, and its governance structure transitions, everyday challenges such as water scarcity, waste management, strained public transport, traffic congestion, and walkable roads persist. As elections approach, the central question is not just who wins, but who will take ownership of solving these problems.

Urban local elections are marked by low participation and weak civic engagement. Mumbai's recent municipal elections saw a turnout of just 52.9%, while Bengaluru recorded 45% in 2015. Chennai (44%), Lucknow (39%), and Hyderabad (47%) show similar trends. This reflects a deeper disconnect with city governments that shape everyday life. A study by Janaagraha and Brown University across eight cities found that only 35% of respondents could name their councillor. Another survey found that 87% had never interacted with one.

In this context, the role of the 369 councillors under the GBA becomes critical. Their effectiveness will depend on their ability to act as public problem-solvers — working in collaboration with citizens, officials, and higher elected representatives. This engagement must begin before elections, with candidates articulating ward-level visions, debating solutions, and building trust with communities. After elections, councillors must keep communities informed and engaged in neighbourhood planning and development.

Another concern is the shrinking space for independent civic leaders in city governance. While municipal elections appear competitive, they are increasingly shaped by party identities, higher-level political narratives, and leadership image. In Mumbai's recent civic elections, none of the 535 independent candidates won. Across Maharashtra, the number of elected independents has sharply declined — from 178 between 2009 and 2013 to just 19 in 2026 across 29 city corporations. Bengaluru reflects a similar trend: only seven independents were elected in the 2015 BBMP polls.

For a city known for strong civic culture and citizen-led initiatives, this signals high entry barriers for non-party-affiliated candidates. Local governments at the third tier were envisioned as spaces for grassroots leadership, relatively free from state and national political dominance. Bengalureans, as patrons of innovation and start-ups, can break the pattern this time by giving a fair chance to political entrepreneurs with a strong vision and commitment to implement it.

Rising financial barriers further limit electoral choice. Local elections, as at the higher tiers, are increasingly tilting in favour of those with deeper pockets. In the 2026 municipal elections in Mumbai, nearly 79% of winning candidates declared assets above Rs 1 crore. In Delhi, 67% of winners in 2022 were crorepatis. Bengaluru shows similar patterns. While declared wealth is not the same as campaign expenditure, it reflects who can afford to compete in a costly electoral arena. In Mumbai, Pune, and Bengaluru, campaign costs are estimated to run into several crores.

As elections become more expensive, the probability of capable local leaders without financial backing dropping out is high. For a city with a large base of middle and lower-income citizens, this raises a critical question: Will financial muscle determine representation?

The upcoming elections offer Bengaluru a rare opportunity to reset its civic politics after years without elected representation. With more wards and potentially closer citizen-representative links, accountable local leadership is within reach. The choice before Bengalureans is clear: elect representatives who manage the *status quo*, or leaders who are committed to making the city more liveable. If voters can overcome cynicism, reject political stereotypes, look beyond party labels, and engage meaningfully with candidates on issues that shape everyday life, Bengaluru can yet again set a benchmark — this time in democratic participation, urban governance, and hence in shaping a truly liveable, world-class metropolis.

(Santosh is Director, Policy Engagement and Sarish is Associate, Strategy and Partnerships, Janaagraha)

‘We have dismantled jail mafias; some inmates out to derail our efforts’

Prisons making headlines for the wrong reasons is nothing new. But authorities in Karnataka say they are taking concrete steps to turn things around. Measures such as installing anti-throwing nets, setting up a central command centre, building an internal intelligence network, and dismantling notorious gangs are being rolled out to sanitise the system. Alok Kumar, DGP (Prisons and Correctional Services), speaks about the range of reforms underway across the state's prisons. Excerpts:

Alok Kumar, *DGP (Prisons and Correctional Services) in conversation with* **Nina C George**

THE DEEP TAKE

● **The recent incidents in Karnataka prisons, like the one where inmates of Central Jail in Bengaluru were found watching OTT platforms, have dented the image of the prison department...**

The entire episode was part of a plan hatched by some prisoners to derail the strong systems being put in place to cleanse the jails and demoralise the top rungs of the prison administration. Only 10 days prior to the incident did we shift prisoners to different barracks in alphabetical order. The plan is to dismantle the gangs and break the nexuses forged inside the prison. The episode was preceded by prisoners arguing with our staff, demanding why they were being shifted. While some gangs reconciled, others didn't and planned to demoralise us. They shot videos of phones being hidden and prisoners freely watching movies on OTT to send out a message that anything can be brought inside the prison. We confiscated the phones and initiated action against those who hatched the conspiracy. We successfully moved the undertrial prisoners and are now in the process of moving high-security inmates accused in bomb blasts and other highly sensitive cases. Prison inmates below 21 years and first-time offenders have also been separated. We don't want first-time offenders and young offenders to mix with hardened criminals.

● **What are the other measures being implemented in Karnataka's prisons?**

We want to develop an ‘intelligence collection system’ within the prisons to keep an eye on prisoners' activities. We are also regularly collecting data, with the assistance of the Central Crime Branch, from respective ‘tower dumps’ to know how many phones are still being used inside Parappana Agrahara Central Prison – how many calls are being made and received. We have managed to confiscate a substantial number of phones, but about 10-15% of phones have evaded us. We have also equipped our staff with 615 body-worn cameras to not only gather evidence but also deter any physical or verbal abuse. We are also increasing the number of ‘prison call systems’ from the current 10 to 50 in Parappana Agrahara to facilitate communication between inmates and their families. More than 100 such new systems are being installed across the state. Cashless canteen system inside the Bengaluru Central Prisons will be brought in so that transactions can be monitored. We have also introduced a prisoners movement detection system and an intrusion detection system, both of which are AI-powered, to get an idea if someone is trying to come inside or go outside. This will help monitor and understand the intent of both staff and prisoners.

● **How successful have your staff been in dismantling prison mafias?**

We have managed to successfully dismantle the growing mafias inside our prisons. There was a prisoner called Kothi Paya in the Bengaluru jail who would collect Rs 300 per day from fellow inmates as *hafta* if they wanted to remain in certain barracks. He would deliberately not seek bail. He has now been moved to a prison in Vijayapura. There was another instance where a prisoner paid Rs 30,000 to a fellow inmate. This came to light after his sister called and alerted us about the cashless transfer he had made. I personally investigated the matter and broke these structures inside the prison. These initiatives come with their own risks. Last week, Ballari prison inmates manhandled a jailer demanding *beedi*, cigarettes and tobacco. But we are keeping watch over any such activities that may still be continuing in the prison.

● **Are anti-throwing nets to stop things from being thrown inside prisons and raising the prison wall heights to 30 feet helping? Still, phones are found. Why?**

Anti-throwing nets have been put up in the Mangaluru jail and parts of Parappana Agrahara. We have proposed the same for Belagavi and Ballari prisons as well. This involves heavy cost. But there have been instances where phones wrapped in polythene bags are placed two to three feet inside the toilet pipe. Existing equipment like Non-Linear Junction Detectors or other such equipment available with us are not capable of detecting contraband items kept deep inside the underground pipes.

● **Why are jammer facilities not effective inside prisons?**

A jammer facility often runs into problems in some pockets of a targeted area because of technical challenges in restricting radio waves. We have also noticed that during our survey of prisons, the signal strength is weak and get stronger once we leave. We have written to a service provider in particular and are in the process of sorting this out.

● **What about the Central Prison Command Centre in place in the state?**

We have a Command Centre where we get live feeds from all our central jails at Bengaluru, Mysuru, Shivamogga, Belagavi, Vijaypura, Dharward and Kalaburagi, and district jails in Tumakuru, Ramanagara, Mangaluru and one more place. The live feeds give us an idea about the movement and activity of the inmates.

A stunning verdict rewrites the rules of corporate morality

A French court's conviction of Lafarge marks a watershed moment in holding corporations criminally accountable for profits made in war zones

M GESSEN

As the judge read her verdict in Paris Criminal Court on Monday, police officers walked to the defence table to arrest Bruno Lafont, 69, the former CEO of one of the world's largest cement manufacturers, Lafarge, and Christian Herrault, 75, the former deputy head of operations. They would begin serving their prison sentences immediately: six and five years, respectively, for financing terrorism in Syria and beyond. Their individual sentences were striking, but the big news was something else: For the first time in France, and possibly for the first time ever, anywhere, an entire corporation had been put on trial and found criminally liable for enabling terrorism. Two of the civil rights lawyers who brought the case were still beaming when I caught up with them a short while later by video at the courthouse. Claire Tixeire, of the European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights, who spoke to me with her colleague Anna Kiefer, of the human rights organisation Sherpa, said seeing a CEO sentenced to prison was “exceptional.” Also exceptional was the scathing tone of Judge Isabelle Prévost-Desprez's verdict, which took almost four hours to read.

The court had concluded that between 2013 and 2014, the cement maker paid about $6.5 million to the Islamic State and other terrorist groups in Syria, to facilitate the company's operations there. Lafarge — now owned by the Swiss conglomerate Holcim — will have to pay about $1.3 million in fines for the crime of financing terrorism and $5.3 million for violating international sanctions. In another case, Lafarge is facing charges of complicity in crimes against humanity. If that case goes to trial and Lafarge is again found guilty, a new chapter in the prosecution of war crimes may begin.

In the best-known war crimes prosecutions — at Nuremberg, in Jerusalem, in The Hague — most of the defendants were military or paramilitary officers. But at Nuremberg, industrialists who had aided and abetted the Holocaust were also put on trial. These cases largely fizzled, in part because the defendants successfully claimed that they had merely been doing what businesspeople do, which is try to maximise profits, and that they hadn't known what kind of atrocities they were enabling.

Eighty years later, Lafarge executives attempted the same basic defence strategy. Prosecutors showed extensive email correspondence documenting agreements with terrorist organisations to help secure the Lafarge cement plant's continued operations in Syria. They projected a slide of a travel document used by Lafarge drivers. It displayed the black Islamic State flag and the text “In the name of Allah the Merciful, the *mujahideen* are asked to let this vehicle transporting cement from the Lafarge plant pass through checkpoints, following an agreement with the company for the trade of this material.” Former employees testified that while their European colleagues were evacuated to safety, Syrian workers were forced to keep doing their jobs in a war zone, under bombings, frequently crossing through checkpoints under sniper fire, facing the threat of kidnapping. All while their employer was financing the armed groups that terrorised Syrian civilians. The former CEO maintained that he hadn't known where the company money was going.

Bruno Lafont, the former chief executive of Lafarge. NYT

When prosecutors produced an email requesting a meeting between Lafarge executives and terrorist-group representatives, Lafont claimed not to have read it.

Documents showed that Lafarge executives knew they were paying groups classified as terrorist organisations by the United States and international agencies. And in an email message that was introduced into evidence, Herrault observed: “You don't need much research to see that, internationally, they are hard-core terrorists.” But a lawyer for Bruno Pescheux, the former director of the Lafarge plant in Syria, claimed ignorance on her client's behalf. Besides, Herrault said at one point, “If we had left, what would have become of the plant? We had a choice between two bad options.”

“The worst one and,” the judge clarified, “the less bad one?”

“Exactly,” Herrault responded.

The defendants had known, the judge concluded, that staying in Syria would require cooperation with terrorist groups. That made Lafarge complicit — not only in atrocities committed in Syria but also in acts of terrorism that the IS carried out in France. One of the prosecution's witnesses was a survivor of the 2015 attacks at the Bataclan theatre, in Paris, which along with coordinated attacks in other locations killed 130 people and left more than 400 injured. In her verdict, Prévost-Desprez kept returning to the testimony of this witness.

The money Lafarge ploughed into the coffers of militant organisations most likely made a significant difference in their capabilities. “The court emphasises that, given the cost of living in Syria during the period in question, the sum of 5,593,897 euros disbursed by Lafarge SA does not have equivalent purchasing power in Raqqa as it does in Paris,” Prévost-Desprez wrote. “Thus, by knowingly paying extremely large sums over many months to three terrorist organisations, Lafarge SA enabled them to expand their influence and fuel their deadly campaigns, ultimately leading to attacks committed abroad as well as on French soil.”

Prosecuting corporations is particularly difficult for at least two reasons. One is the problem of intent, which is essential to determining guilt in a criminal trial. Does a corporation have a mind? Can it have intent? The defence in the Lafarge trial claimed that the company's and its executives' only intent was to keep the Syria plant in operation; the judge concluded that the executives' exclusive focus on this goal was itself incriminating, since it could be achieved only by cooperating with armed groups terrorising and plundering Syria.

But the bigger problem with prosecuting corporations is resource disparity. “These cases are mind-bendingly complex, involving subsidiaries, across different countries, regulated by different laws,” Rebecca Hamilton, a war-crimes lawyer who is now a law professor at American University in Washington wrote to me. “They take decades. The defendants in these situations are multinational corporations with effectively unlimited resources to throw at a lawsuit. On the other side, we have victim communities and their nonprofit lawyers urging public prosecutors to bring charges.” The Lafarge case began with an investigative story in *Le Monde*. Civil-society organisations then filed a criminal complaint, and government prosecutors took up the case. It helped that the US Justice Department had conducted its own investigation and, in 2022, concluded that Lafarge had paid terrorist organisations; Lafarge agreed to pay a $778 million fine, without a trial. And still, the judge in Paris called out Lafarge and its executives for having purposefully dragged out the proceedings.

In October 2025, a federal jury in a civil trial in Manhattan found BNP Paribas, an international bank, liable for aiding atrocities in Sudan. (The bank is appealing.) And last summer, the UN Special Rapporteur for the occupied Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, released a report that laid out the role of corporations in the genocide in the Gaza Strip with unprecedented clarity. (Albanese was immediately subjected to US sanctions.)

“The intermingling of corporations and atrocities goes back to the slave trade and colonialism,” Hamilton wrote. But one thing does seem new, at least as compared with other atrocities that have occurred in living memory. It's the absence of pretence. One war after another is unleashed without even the pretence of legitimacy. President Donald Trump doesn't just announce genocidal intent on social media: He advertises his plans to take over sovereign countries, he brags about kidnapping a head of State, he flaunts his disregard for human life, and, of course, he vows to take all the oil. The world's most powerful man has made cynicism itself into a ruling ideology.

The court in Paris has just ruled that cynicism and an exclusive focus on profits can constitute a crime. We are not in Paris, of course. But one reason it was so gratifying to watch Lafarge be convicted and its executives, in their stiff-collared shirts and well-cut suits, be placed under arrest is that these men had surely never imagined that they could be punished for what they did.

The New York Times

If Basavanna lived today

G MOHAN PRASAD

If Basavanna were to walk among us in the 21st century, his presence would be felt not as a relic of history, but as a living force of conscience. The 12th-century philosopher, poet, and social reformer who challenged caste, ritualism, and inequality would likely stand today at the forefront of humanity's most urgent struggles—social justice, economic dignity, ethical governance, gender equality, and the responsible use of technology.

The world he would encounter is vastly different in form, yet strikingly similar in its moral challenges. The rigid caste barriers of mediaeval society may have weakened in law, but discrimination persists in new and subtle forms—through class divides, digital exclusion, prejudice, and economic inequality. Basavanna's response would almost certainly be the same as it was centuries ago: every human being is equal, and no birth, background, religion, or profession can determine a person's worth.

In today's age, Basavanna's immortal doctrine of Kayaka would resonate with extraordinary power. He would remind society that every form of honest work deserves dignity, from farmers and sanitation workers to software engineers, gig workers, teachers, and healthcare professionals. In a world increasingly shaped by automation and artificial intelligence, he would insist that technology must empower labour, not devalue the worker.

His principle of Dasoha would perhaps emerge as a model for ethical economics. At a time when wealth inequality dominates global debate, Basavanna would likely call upon corporations, governments, and citizens to ensure that prosperity reaches the last person in society. He would advocate that profits, public resources, and innovation be directed toward education, healthcare, rural development, and opportunities for the marginalised.

If Basavanna lived today, social media would become his new Anubhava Mantapa. Instead of a hall in Kalyana, he might create digital spaces where people from all backgrounds—students, thinkers, workers, women, and reformers—could openly discuss truth, justice, spirituality, and public welfare. These forums would not be arenas of hatred but platforms of reasoned dialogue, much like the original assembly that welcomed every voice.

On issues of caste and social discrimination, Basavanna would remain uncompromising. He would stand firmly with the oppressed, speaking against untouchability, exclusion, and every form of social humiliation. His *vachanas* in the modern age may appear as short, powerful messages shared instantly across the world, challenging society to look inward and confront its hypocrisies.

Women's empowerment would occupy a central place in his vision of the 21st century. Just as he welcomed voices like Akka Mahadevi into the spiritual discourse of his time, today he would champion equal opportunities in education, leadership, and public life. He would speak strongly against gender violence, discrimination, and systems that deny women autonomy and dignity.

Basavanna would also be a fearless voice in politics. He would demand that governance be transparent, compassionate, and centred on public welfare rather than power. Corruption, misuse of public funds, and divisive politics would draw his strongest criticism. For him, leadership would mean service, accountability, and moral courage.

Environmental concerns, too, would likely find a place in his thought. A thinker who saw the divine in life itself would not remain silent on ecological destruction, pollution, and the exploitation of natural resources. He would urge humanity to live responsibly, seeing nature not merely as property but as sacred trust. Most importantly, Basavanna would continue to challenge humanity's inner emptiness. He would remind us that temples of stone matter less than the temple within—the conscience, the body, and the soul. His timeless call would remain: live truthfully, work honestly, share compassionately, and reject every system that diminishes human dignity. If Basavanna lived today, he would not belong to one religion, caste, region, or nation. He would belong to the world. His message would travel beyond Karnataka, beyond India, and beyond all boundaries, offering a moral roadmap for a fractured global society.

The greatest tribute to imagining Basavanna in the 21st century is to recognise that, in many ways, he already lives among us—whenever we honour labour, uphold equality, empower women, share our resources, and place humanity above division.

In that sense, the question is not whether Basavanna would fit into the modern world, but whether the modern world is ready to live by Basavanna's ideals.

(The writer is the secretary of the Veerashaiva Basava Samaj)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: APRIL 1976

A N Ray frowns on judges talking politics

New Delhi, April 19

Chief Justice A. N. Ray of the Supreme Court today expressed his strong disapproval of the manner in which some judges discussed politics in public. “Some judges go to some places and discuss politics. It becomes difficult for this court to say anything,” he said, admitting an appeal of 20 advocates against a judgment of the Punjab and Haryana High Court in a contempt case involving a High Court judge who had allegedly made undesirable remarks in February last year.

25 YEARS AGO: APRIL 2001

Guns fall silent on Indo-Bangla border

New Delhi, April 19

After the killing of 16 Indian troops on the India- Bangladesh border, the exchange of fire between BDR and the BSF ceased this afternoon in Boraibari in Assam even as BDR men withdrew from Meghalaya's border village of Pyrdiwah, easing tension triggered by the worst-ever border clashes between the two countries in the last 30 years. Home Secretary Kamal Pande said that the heavy exchange of mortar and small-arm fire ended this afternoon.

OASIS | BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ

Investing in a better future

We all dream of a better world where there is peace, happiness and harmony. No one would like degradation of the environment, loss of human lives due to wars and murders, or social, economic and political conditions embroiled with high tension and turmoil that drain human energy and make life miserable.

On the contrary, the general desire is for life of harmony and health, wellbeing and wealth and happiness and purity. But the question is, what are those values and how can such a socio-politico-economic system be established which has those values and which will enhance human experience and enable men and women to have such a lifestyle as can make such a society viable? If we conduct a survey among various groups of people on this particular subject, we will find that their opinion would most probably crystalise around ten or fifteen major points. They would say that a better world is one in which the following exist only in milder forms or in a lesser degree than we have them in the present-day world.

These major causes of suffering are wars; violence and cruelty in any form; poverty, unemployment and environmental pollution and ecological imbalance; corruption; lack of freedom; rivalry; and absence or lack of love and co-operation at various levels of society. Post this survey, if we conduct another kind of survey, asking every segment of society about what efforts or improvements they expect from the other segments so that we may have a better world order, people would say that they want the following: Scientists are to have an orientation of spirituality; religious leaders are to have a scientific temper; doctors are to treat not only the body but also the mind or the soul; education is to aid spiritual and moral development; women are to be given the social status they deserve and men's attitudes and outlooks towards them to be more spiritualised. In short, society should have a balance of love and law, and it should be based on the principles of justice, fair play and equality of opportunity. Now these and such other aims can be fulfilled if every segment of society works a bit for the fulfilment of what other segments expect of it. For this global task is required the global co-operation. Hence, a new kind of bank to which each individual or institution can offer its contributions so as to build a better world is the need of the hour.

BLAME GAME: Congress accuses BJP of hypocrisy; NDA frames defeat as betrayal of women

Political slugfest intensifies over women's quota

NDA leaders launch nationwide attack on Oppn

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

BJP and NDA leaders fanned out across the country on Sunday, accusing the I.N.D.I.A bloc of sabotaging the 33% women's reservation by defeating the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, in the Lok Sabha.

Several Union ministers, senior BJP leaders, and NDA allies, along with chief ministers of BJP-ruled states, addressed press conferences and rallies to take the narrative directly to voters. The NDA leaders termed the failure a "betrayal of women", and announced statewide protests, starting Tuesday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the charge, slamming the Trinamool Congress at a rally in West Bengal's Bishnupur. He said the TMC had betrayed the women of Bengal.

Senior BJP leaders Ravi Shankar Prasad and Smriti Irani addressed the media in New Delhi, accusing the Congress and its allies of hypocrisy and treating women as "political tools".

Irani highlighted the Congress' historical "feudal" approach to women's issues, while Prasad emphasised that the NDA's push was a genuine effort for equitable representation, and not linked to any ulterior motives on delimitation, as alleged by the Opposition.

In Patna, Bihar CM Samrat Choudhary called it a "mocking" of women's reservation and announced the BJP Mahila Morcha's "aakrosh morcha" protests. He said, "PM Modi is working to empower all the women of the country."

In Lucknow, UP CM Yogi Adityanath described the Opposition's conduct as akin to the "disrobing of Draupadi" and a "conspiracy against women".

Other leaders who joined the attack included Union Food Minister Pralhad Joshi (Thiruvananthapuram), former minister Anurag Thakur (Bengaluru), JD(S) leader and Union Steel Minister H D Kumaraswamy (Delhi), Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu (Godavari rally), and senior BJP leader Tamilisai Soundararajan in Tamil Nadu.

AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami criticised the DMK government for opposing the bill, saying they would not be forgiven for their stand.

YOGI ADITYANATH
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister

"the scene which played out in the House, how the INDIA bloc – the Congress, Samajwadi Party, TMC, and DMK – acted, draws our attention back to the scene of the 'cheerharan' of Draupadi (in the Kaurav assembly).

ANNPURNA DEVI
Union Minister

"The Congress, Samajwadi Party, Trinamool Congress and the DMK always wanted that women do not get their rights. When the numbers came up in the House, they were celebrating. In other words, they did not want women to get their rights. Women have now woken up, and they will give a reply to the Congress, SP, DMK and the TMC in the future.

BJP doesn't represent people's will: Akhilesh

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday said the BJP-led NDA has no right to remain in power at the Centre because its failure to get a Constitution amendment bill passed in the Lok Sabha to tweak the women's quota law has shown that it didn't represent the will of the people.

"The opposition, in real terms, represents people's will," the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said.

Speaking at the party headquarters here, Yadav also said that the women's reservation law can't be discussed until the 16th Census is complete.

"The failure of the government to pass the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha means it does not represent the will of the people. Therefore, it has no right to remain in power. The opposition, in real terms, represents people's will," he said.

Modi shedding crocodile tears: Cong

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE
Congress president

"It is not a women's reservation bill; it is a delimitation law. They tried to divide the votes of Opposition parties and rule.

JAIRAM RAMESH
Congress Gen Secy

"The FAQs – which read more like the Government's Factually Abused Quackery – are silent on the real questions about delimitation that were asked by the entire Opposition during the debate

Congress on Sunday claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was shedding crocodile tears over the 33% women quota and urged him to remove the condition of delimitation he put on its implementation.

Addressing a press conference, the party's Social Media and Digital Platforms Chairperson Supriya Shrinate said it was categorically clear that what was defeated in the Lok Sabha was not the Women Reservation Bill but the Constitution Amendment Bill on delimitation.

"The Women's Reservation Bill was passed in 2023. It was not defeated. Delimitation, which you wanted to thrust on the nation, was defeated. Modi is shedding crocodile tears," she said.

Referring to a cartoon, she said Modi is carrying a basket of 543 mangoes and is not giving 181 mangoes to women, saying he can give them only if he can increase it to 850, which he alleges the Opposition is not allowing him to do.

She said if Modi were "really serious and sincere", he should bring a Bill to provide a 33% quota to women in the existing 543 seats immediately. "You have put a condition on the 2023 law. Remove that condition. You are the ones creating hurdles. You want to keep men happy and not reduce their seats," she said.

On Modi's remarks that he owed an apology to women, she said he was right, as he owes them one for what happened to two Manipur women, for what happened in Hathras and Unnao, and for what happened with the women Olympians and how the convicts in the Bilkis Bano case were honoured and he kept silent every time.

"You are right. Women won't forget their insults," she said while recalling his remarks against top Congress leader Sonia Gandhi as "Congress' widow", as well as statements like "Rs 50 crore girlfriend" besides comparing a woman MP with 'Shoorpanaka" and how he heckled Mamata Banerjee as 'Didi, O', Didi".

She also claimed that the BJP does not give adequate representation to women in their party, by saying that there were only 31 women among its 240 MPs and only 164 in 1,654 MLAs. Among the 21 chief ministers, she said, the BJP has given the post to only one woman.

"Five BJP lawmakers were facing serious rape charges, and 54 MPs' and MLAs' names are mentioned in serious crimes like murder and rape," she said.

Flagrant MCC breach: CPM, CPI move EC against Modi's address

NEW DELHI, DHNS: CPM and CPI on Sunday approached the Election Commission against Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his "political" address to the nation in the midst of Assembly elections by "using state resources", claiming that it violated the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).

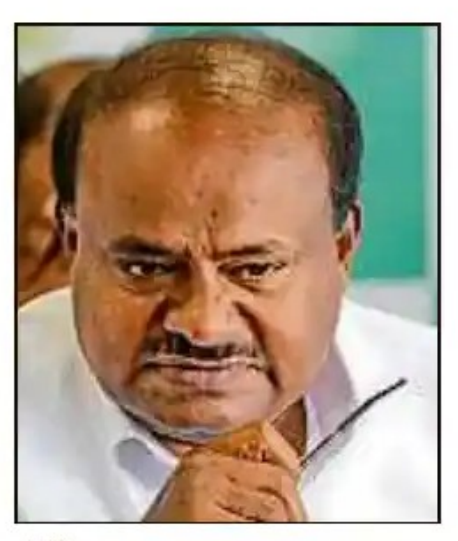
In his letter to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, CPM General Secretary MA Baby said the use of a public broadcaster for political messaging during an election by the Prime Minister creates an uneven playing field and undermines the principle of free and fair elections.

"The content, tone, and messaging of the address can by no stretch of imagination be termed as governmental communication. It was blatantly political, targeting the opposition parties — naming many of them — and seeking to influence public opinion, including the voters of Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, in favour of the ruling party," he said.

He said it was a "flagrant breach" of the MCC laid down in Section 4 under the heading 'Party in Power', which makes it clear that advertisement at the cost of the public exchequer and misuse of official mass media during elections with a view to furthering the prospects of the party in power shall be scrupulously avoided.

Kumaraswamy accuses DMK of betraying South states

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Union Steel Minister and JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy on Sunday alleged that southern states had become victims of the DMK's "selfishness" after Tamil Nadu's ruling party opposed the Constitution Amendment Bill seeking quicker implementation of women's reservation, leading to its defeat in the Lok Sabha.



Kumaraswamy

Kumaraswamy said southern states had lost a "golden opportunity" because of the DMK's last-minute U-turn, and held the party solely responsible for the setback.

"The DMK, after initially expressing support for key Constitutional Amendment Bills, subsequently took a U-turn, thereby depriving southern states of a significant and beneficial opportunity," he told reporters.

Referring to a recent all-party meeting convened by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Kumaraswamy noted that DMK leaders were thoroughly briefed on the Women's Reservation Bill and the accompanying delimitation proposals. There was no immediate opposition from them at the meeting, he said.

The Union steel minister pointed out that Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK chief M K Stalin had even suggested convening a special Parliamentary session in June to pass these Bills — an indication of tacit approval. However, the DMK later withdrew support, citing political reasons, the minister alleged.

Oppn braces for narrative war after defeating delimitation Bill

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

WhatsApp groups to monitor MPs' attendance, firming up strategy amid rising confusion about government moves, and designing a counter-narrative on delimitation kept Opposition managers busy in the last four days that culminated with the falling of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha.

The vote on the Bill on delimitation for early implementation of women's quota after increasing the Lok Sabha seats displayed unity in the Opposition, which had appeared fragile in the election season. However, the 235 members of the Opposition bloc — barring nine, seven from the Trinamool Congress who were busy campaigning and two from the Congress who were unwell — voted in unison.

The Opposition got the support of four others, taking their total vote against the government to 230. Two independents were absent.

The ruling NDA got 298, five more than its strength, which includes four YSR Congress votes.

As jubilant Opposition leaders gathered for a meeting on Saturday morning, Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi asked them why they were "so quiet", prompting an impromptu celebration.

The run-up to the vote on the Constitution Amendment Bill, which required a two-thirds majority and in this case needed 352, saw suspense.

On Thursday night, Opposition sources claimed the government managers tried to impress upon some of their MPs to submit amendments seeking a 50% proportional increase in Lok Sabha seats, promising to accept them if they were serious about it.

Information trickled in that the government was exploring options to delink the Constitution Amendment Bill and the Delimitation Bill.

The Opposition managers had to burn the midnight oil on Thursday after the government notified the implementation of the 2023 women's quota law. Sources said they had to prepare counter-strategies for the various scenarios the government could come up with.

Voting was another challenge, and a warning came from none other than Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge. He wanted the MPs "not to get provoked" by remarks from the Treasury benches. "No walkouts or losing cool was Kharge's instruction," a senior leader told *DH*.

Sources said the Opposition parties also coordinating on ensuring attendance.

Fourteen MPs submitted at least 115 amendments to the Constitution amendment Bill and the two linked Bills, but party managers asked them not to move them when the matters came up. However, the fall of the Bill did not end the Opposition managers' troubles: The BJP was quick to accuse them of being anti-woman.

Narrative war

The Opposition floor leaders' Saturday-morning meeting saw them once again brainstorming over the narrative war.

The first signs of the Opposition line of attack were unveiled when the Congress fielded Priyanka Gandhi Vadra at a press conference — her first in Delhi — soon after Parliament adjourned sine die.

The initial plan was that Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh would meet the media, but it was changed after a suggestion emerged at the Opposition leaders' meeting.

Night protests over death of 2 kids turn violent in Manipur

IMPHAL, PTI: Thousands of people hit the streets at various places in Manipur valley districts on Sunday evening, protesting against a recent bomb attack in which two children were killed.

Night rallies were organised at Koirengei and Hatta Golpati in Imphal East district, Kakching district and Mayai Lambi in Imphal West district.

The protesters reportedly clashed with security personnel at Uripok in Imphal West, Khabam Lamkhai and Koirengei in Imphal East and Kakching town in Kakching.

The security forces used tear gas shells to disperse the agitators at several places in these districts, police said.

The protests, under the aegis of the All Manipur United Clubs Organisation (AMUCO), COCOMI and others, called for immediate action against alleged Kuki militants operating in the hill districts, as well as the arrest of those responsible for the April 7 bomb attack at Tronglaobi in Bishnupur, which killed two children.

The rallists also called for the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) before the 2027 Census exercise.

Following the bomb attack, protests have been held at various places in the five valley districts.

'Anti-social elements'

Earlier in the day, the Manipur Police said "anti-social elements under the guise of protesters" engaged in violent activities in several parts of the state capital in night rallies.

India raises safety concerns with Iran after vessels come under fire

Indian-flagged ship, 10th since March, crosses Strait

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

An Indian-flagged crude oil tanker safely crossed the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday while two other vessels were forced to turn back after coming under fire, prompting India to raise safety concerns with Iran.

The Shipping Corporation of India tanker Desh Garima, carrying 31 Indian seafarers, transited the strategic waterway on April 18 and is expected to reach Mumbai on April 22, the government said on Sunday. It is the 10th Indian-flagged vessel to cross the strait since early March.

In contrast, VLCC Sanmar Herald and bulk carrier Jag Arnav reported firing incidents in the past 24 hours and returned to the Persian Gulf. No crew injuries were reported.

According to MarineTraffic data, two more Indian tankers — Desh Vaibhav and Desh Vibhor — reversed course near the choke point, taking the total number of Indian-flagged ships in the Persian Gulf to 14.

India summoned Iran's ambassador in New Delhi on Saturday to convey "deep concern" over the firing incident and urged Tehran to ensure the safety of merchant ships and resume facilitating passage.

"The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in New Delhi was called in yesterday (Saturday) by the Ministry of External Affairs for a meeting with the foreign secretary," the update said.

'Deep concern'

"During the meeting, the foreign secretary conveyed India's deep concern at the shooting incident earlier yesterday involving two Indian-flagged ships in the Strait of Hormuz. He noted the importance that India attached to the safety of merchant shipping and mariners," it added, noting that all Indian crew members were safe, and the situation was being closely monitored.

India LPG consumption slides 13% amid West Asia conflict

India's cooking gas LPG consumption fell by a steep 13% in March as supply disruptions linked to the West Asia conflict hit availability for both household kitchens and commercial users, according to latest official data.

LPG consumption was at 2.379 million tonne in March, 12.8% lower than 2.729 million tonne consumed in the same period last year. India imports about 60% of its LPG requirements, much of it via the Strait of Hormuz, which was effectively shut following US and Israeli strikes on Iran and Tehran's retaliation. With supplies from Saudi Arabia and the UAE disrupted, the government has cut LPG supplies to commercial establishments like hotels, and industries to safeguard household cooking gas availability.

Dinesh Trivedi set to be next B'desh high commissioner

NEW DELHI, PTI: Dinesh Trivedi, a former Union minister and veteran politician from West Bengal, is expected to be appointed India's next High Commissioner to Bangladesh, sources said on Sunday.

Pranay Verma, who was serving as India's High Commissioner in Dhaka since September 2022, was on April 10 named as the next ambassador to Belgium and the European Union.

It is learnt that New Delhi has been considering appointing a political figure to the key diplomatic post in Dhaka amid efforts to reset bilateral ties after the new Bangladesh Nationalist Party government led by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman was formed in February following elections.

The relations between India and Bangladesh witnessed a major downturn after the interim government headed by Muhammad Yunus came to power following the collapse of the Sheikh Hasina government in August 2024.

Dinesh Trivedi

Trivedi, 75, served as the railway minister and Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare during the UPA rule. He was elected to the Rajya Sabha from West Bengal and was a Lok Sabha MP from Barrackpore constituency in the state. He quit the Trinamool Congress in February 2021 and joined the BJP.

The sources said Trivedi is likely to be appointed as the High Commissioner in Dhaka, a key position, in view of his extensive experience.

However, there was no formal announcement yet.

India, US chief negotiators to begin 3-day bilateral trade agreement talks from today

NEW DELHI, PTI: About a dozen officers from India will reach Washington on April 20 for three-day talks with the US authorities on the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement (BTA), an official said.

As the tariff landscape has changed in the US, both sides may like to re-examine the agreement framework, the text of which was released on February 7.

Following the US Supreme Court's decision against the sweeping tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump on a number of countries, the Trump administration imposed a 10% tariff on all countries from February 24 for 150 days.

"The meeting will happen from April 20-22 in Washington DC. India's chief negotiator, Darpan Jain (additional secretary in the department of commerce) is leading the team. Officers from the customs and external affairs ministry are also part of the Indian team," the official said.

Further, the two unilateral investigations launched by the US Trade Representative (USTR) may also figure in the three-day deliberations.

India rejected allegations made by the US Trade Representative in those two investigations under its Section 301 of trade law and requested termination of the probes, as the initiation notice has failed to provide a cogent rationale to substantiate the claims.

According to that framework, the US had agreed to reduce tariffs on India to 18%, from 50%. It had removed the 25% tariffs on Indian goods for buying Russian oil and was to cut the remaining 25% to 18% under the pact. But on February 20, the US SC ruled against Trump's reciprocal tariffs.

MOO-DERN TIMES

With AI at the collar, cows wired for wellness

S N V SUDHIR
HYDERABAD, DHNS

A necklace is usually a piece of jewellery. For dairy farmers in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kashmir, it may soon become a lifeline — a wearable AI sensor that monitors cattle health in real time and alerts farmers before problems spiral into costly losses.

Developed by Hanumayamma Innovations and Technologies, a California-based agri-tech firm with India operations headquartered in Hyderabad, the Cow Necklace Sensor is a wearable veterinary device fitted around a cow or buffalo's neck. It continuously tracks rumination patterns, body temperature, activity levels, feeding behaviour and environmental conditions, transmitting all of it wirelessly to the Hanumayamma Dairy Analytics platform, where artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms convert raw livestock data into actionable health insights.

The Cow Necklace Sensor tracks rumination patterns, body temperature and feeding behaviour.

The platform goes beyond farm-level monitoring. It integrates sensor data with global datasets — including climate indicators, agricultural commodity markets, and macroeconomic signals — to enable predictive veterinary care, improve milk productivity, and even reduce methane emissions. Each deployed sensor is paired with a dedicated AI monitoring agent, enabling individualised health tracking for every animal in the herd.

The practical result is that farmers and veterinarians can detect early signs of disease, stress, or productivity decline far sooner than conventional observation allows, thereby reducing veterinary costs and improving herd outcomes at scale.

"Artificial intelligence is transforming agriculture from the ground up," said Jayashankar Vuppalapati, founder and CTO of Hanumayamma Innovations and Technology. "Our mission is to democratise advanced AI technology so that even small and marginal farmers benefit from intelligent agriculture and sustainable dairy farming," he added.

Since its launch recently, approximately 10,000 sensors have been deployed worldwide. In India, 100 sensors are active in Hyderabad, Telangana, and another 100 in Visakhapatnam and Andhra Pradesh, covering both cows and buffaloes.

LeT's 'Khargosh' found in Saudi Arabia, used fake passport

SRINAGAR/NEW DELHI, PTI: Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist Umer Harris, alias 'Khargosh' (rabbit), is believed to be in Saudi Arabia after managing to escape the country using a forged passport issued in the name of Sajjad, claiming to be a resident of Rajasthan, officials said on Sunday.

The Srinagar Police, which is spearheading the investigation into the interstate LeT terror module, has shared details with central intelligence agencies, raising concerns about systemic loopholes that allow such abuse, they said.

While the case, registered by the J&K Police earlier this month, is likely to be taken over by the National Investigation Agency, details have been shared with the state police forces concerned to facilitate urgent action and plug the gaps, they said.

The unravelling of this interstate terror module has exposed several loopholes. Questions are being raised about how a passport was issued by authorities in Rajasthan despite the police verification system in place.

A year after Pahalgam, India is still asking questions about J&K

It's not only safety and stability, Kashmiris too are under the scanner

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

People pay homage at the Baisaran memorial at Pahalgam in Anantnag on Sunday, remembering the martyrs of the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22 last year. PTI

The April 22, 2025, terror attack in Pahalgam, in which 25 tourists and a local were killed, continues to shape how many Indians view Jammu and Kashmir and its safety, stability and the nature of violence there.

The images from the attack spread rapidly across television and social media at the time, leaving a lasting impact far beyond the Valley.

For many watching, the first question was: Is Kashmir still unsafe?

The attack reinforced a sense of vulnerability. Officials, however, said such incidents were intended to create that perception. "Striking a place like Pahalgam ensured national attention and created fear well beyond the immediate area," said a senior police officer.

The next question was: If the situation has improved, why do such attacks still happen?

Security officials pointed to the changing nature of terrorism — fewer large-scale incidents, but occasional high-impact strikes designed to draw attention. These, they said, continue to draw logistical and ideological support from across the border, amid local recruitment declining compared to earlier phases.

For many Indians, however, the most pressing concern is: Does this violence represent Kashmir or Kashmiris? Voices from within the Valley suggest otherwise. "No sane person would endorse acts of violence. Pahalgam was barbaric," said political analyst Javid Trali.

This gap between the perpetrators and the people has become more pronounced over the years. For many residents, such attacks are disruptions.

That distinction is also central to another question being asked across India: How should Kashmiris be viewed after such incidents?

Experience shows that attacks can lead to suspicion towards Kashmiris living or studying in other parts India. Community members caution against such reactions. Maroof, who hails from Srinagar and studies in Bengaluru, said: "People assume we are somehow connected to it. But we are not. We want peace, the same as everyone else."

Officials warned that blurring this line could amplify the very divisions such attacks sought to create.

Another question is about the larger message behind the Pahalgam attack. By targeting civilians in this well-known location, the perpetrators aimed to ensure that the impact extended far beyond the immediate casualties.

"This kind of violence only brings suffering to ordinary people here," said Trali. "We are the ones who have to live with the consequences. People outside should understand that Kashmiris want peace, not this."

The response, however, has not been limited to fear. "We stand in solidarity with the people of India," a statement from the Commonwealth Secretariat said, reflecting international condemnation of the attack.

We don't spare those who attack us: Rajnath

RADHAPURAM (TAMIL NADU), PTI: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said that India does not disturb anyone but does not spare those who attack it, remarks made in reference to Operation Sindoor.

Rajnath Singh

The defence minister's comments came days ahead of the first anniversary of the Pahalgam attack in Jammu and Kashmir, where terrorists killed 26 tourists in an incident that sparked national outrage.

"Operation Sindoor—remember, we do not disturb anyone, but we do not spare anyone if they disturb us. Wait, your ambitions will come true, I assure you," the defence minister said while addressing a roadshow in support of the BJP candidate in Radhapuram for the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections.

Soon after the terror attack, India launched Operation Sindoor, targeting terror launchpads inside Pakistan.

32 bank officials among 52 held in pan-India cyber fraud crackdown

HYDERABAD, PTI: Hyderabad Police on Sunday said that they have dismantled a pan-India cyber fraud network involving bank officials by arresting 52 accused across nine states.

Under 'Operation Octopus 2.O', as many as 32 bank officials, 15 mule account holders and five middlemen were apprehended for complicity, Hyderabad Police Commissioner V C Sajjanar said in a release.

The operation launched recently led to the arrest of bank officials who were found to be in connivance in the opening of mule bank accounts, which were used to facilitate cyber frauds, he said.

Police said there has been a significant rise in investment scams, trading frauds, and "digital arrest" scams, wherein fraudsters exploit victims through manipulation, intimidation, and emotional coercion, leading to substantial financial losses.

Recognising the seriousness of the situation, 'Operation Octopus–1' was conceptualised to deliver a decisive strike against these illegal networks. Through an intensive investigation into the surge of such frauds, the Cyber Crime Police Station (CCPS), uncovered a nexus of 350 bank accounts used to siphon off victims' funds, police said.

These accounts were linked to approximately 850 cases across the country involving transactions amounting to nearly Rs 150 crores, police said.

Accordingly, in February this year, 'Operation Octopus–1' was executed across 16 states by 32 police teams, resulting in the arrest of 117 accused persons.

Building on the outcomes of Operation Octopus–1, Operation Octopus 2.O was launched, they said.

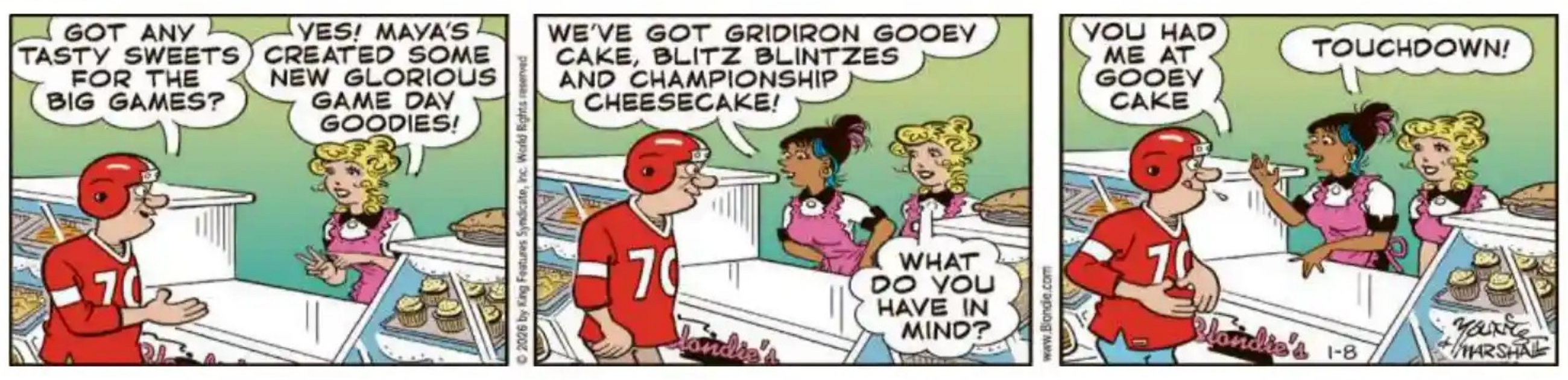
The operation Octopus 2.O was executed simultaneously across nine states with 16 special teams deployed to identified bank official targets in Maharashtra, Delhi, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Bihar. The operation went on for seven days, and 52 individuals, including bank officials who played pivotal roles in the execution of the fraud, were apprehended, police said.

The mule account holders knowingly permitted their bank accounts to be used for layering and laundering illicit funds; the five key middlemen were responsible for procuring these accounts and facilitating the movement of funds to the masterminds, police added.

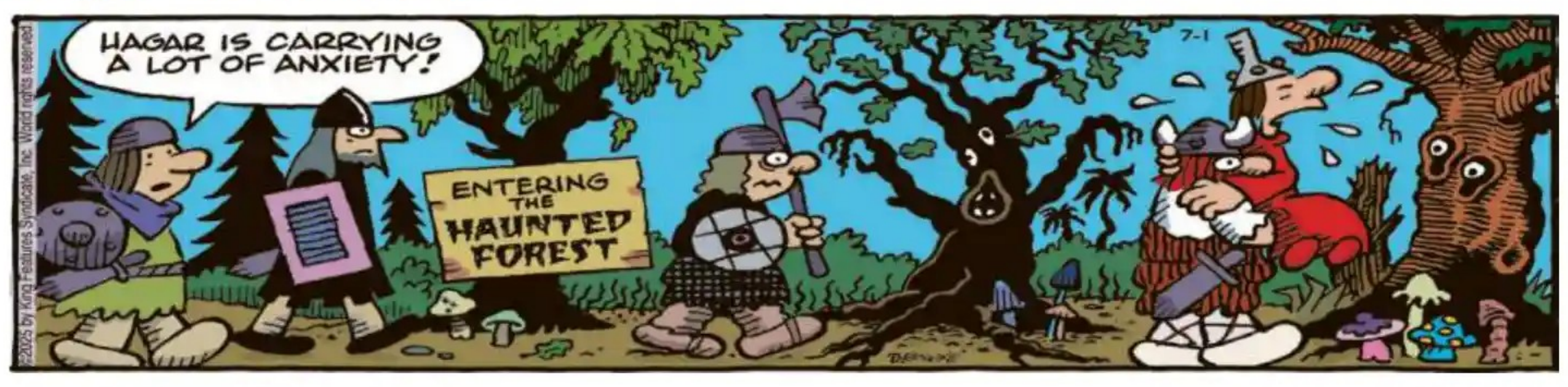
MISCELLANY

◆ COMICS ◆

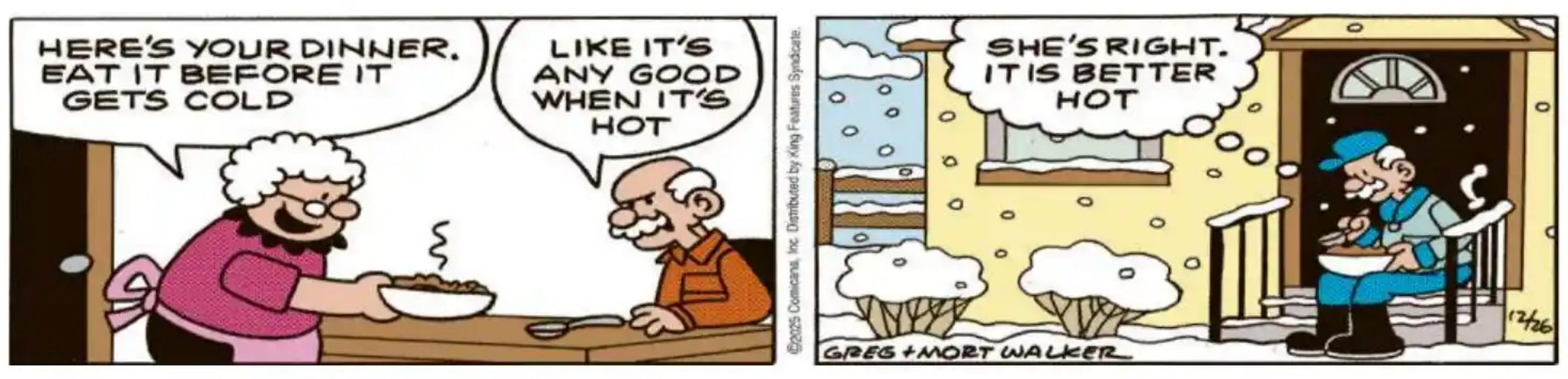
Blondie


GOT ANY TASTY SWEETS FOR THE BIG GAMES?
YES! MAYA'S CREATED SOME NEW GLORIOUS GAME DAY GOODIES!
WE'VE GOT GRIDIRON GOOEY CAKE, BLITZ BLINTZES AND CHAMPIONSHIP CHEESECAKE!
WHAT DO YOU HAVE IN MIND?
YOU HAD ME AT GOOEY CAKE
TOUCHDOWN!
Blondie's
1-8
YOUNG & MARSHALL

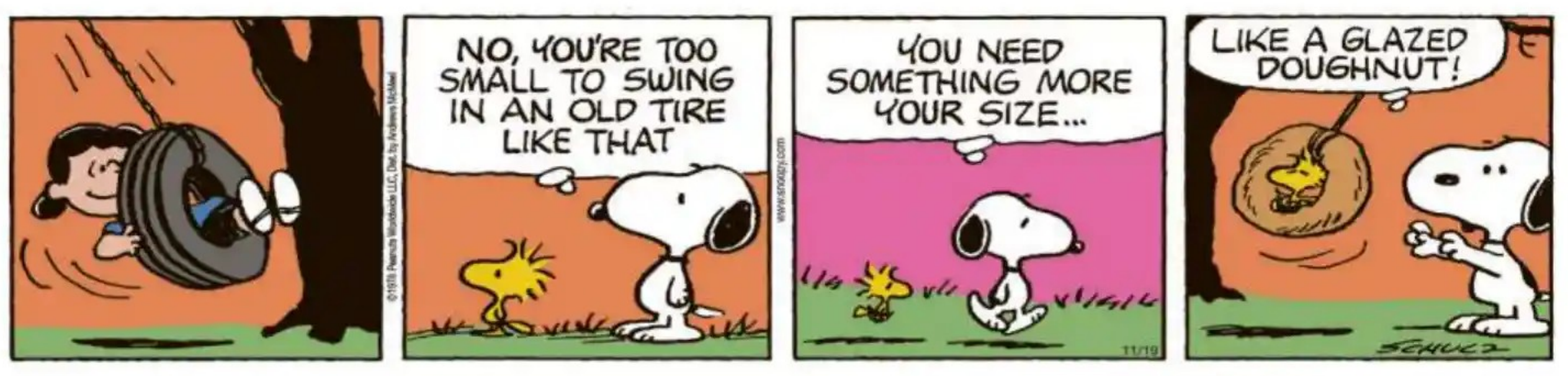
Hagar The Horrible


HAGAR IS CARRYING A LOT OF ANXIETY!
ENTERING THE HAUNTED FOREST
7-1

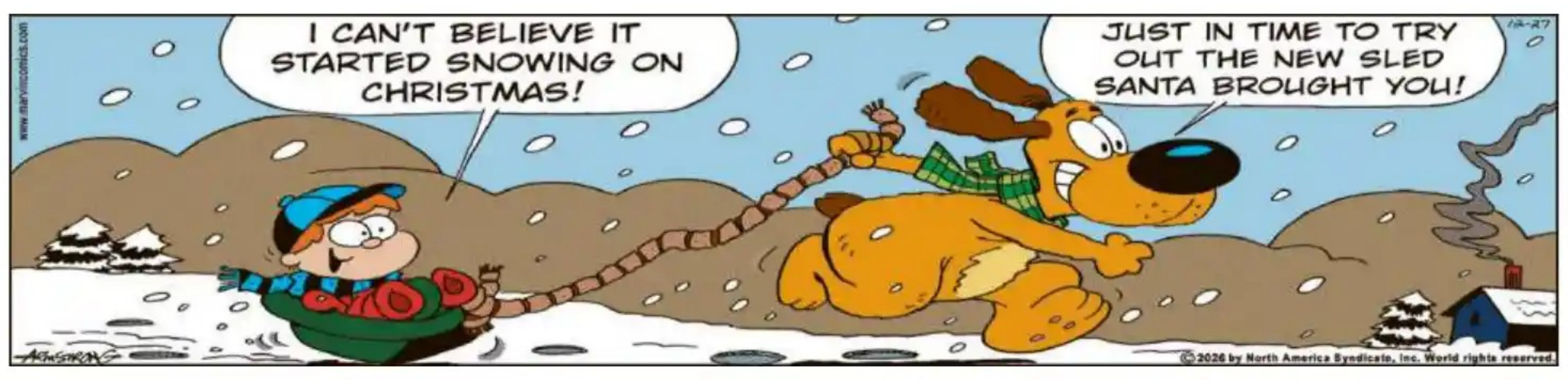
Beetle Bailey


HERE'S YOUR DINNER. EAT IT BEFORE IT GETS COLD
LIKE IT'S ANY GOOD WHEN IT'S HOT
SHE'S RIGHT. IT IS BETTER HOT
12/26
GREG + MORT WALKER

Peanuts


NO, YOU'RE TOO SMALL TO SWING IN AN OLD TIRE LIKE THAT
YOU NEED SOMETHING MORE YOUR SIZE...
LIKE A GLAZED DOUGHNUT!
11/19
SCHULZ

Marvin


I CAN'T BELIEVE IT STARTED SNOWING ON CHRISTMAS!
JUST IN TIME TO TRY OUT THE NEW SLED SANTA BROUGHT YOU!
12-27

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

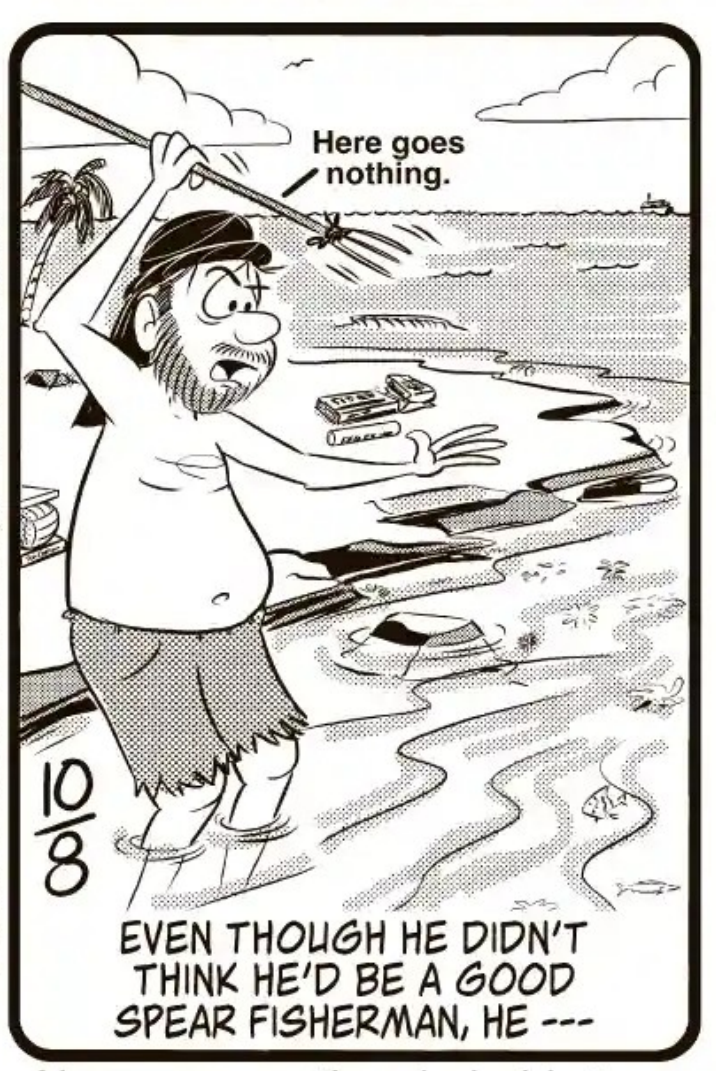
Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

FOTAO

OPLIS

OTTAOT

SBTAEK


Here goes nothing.
EVEN THOUGH HE DIDN'T THINK HE'D BE A GOOD SPEAR FISHERMAN, HE ---

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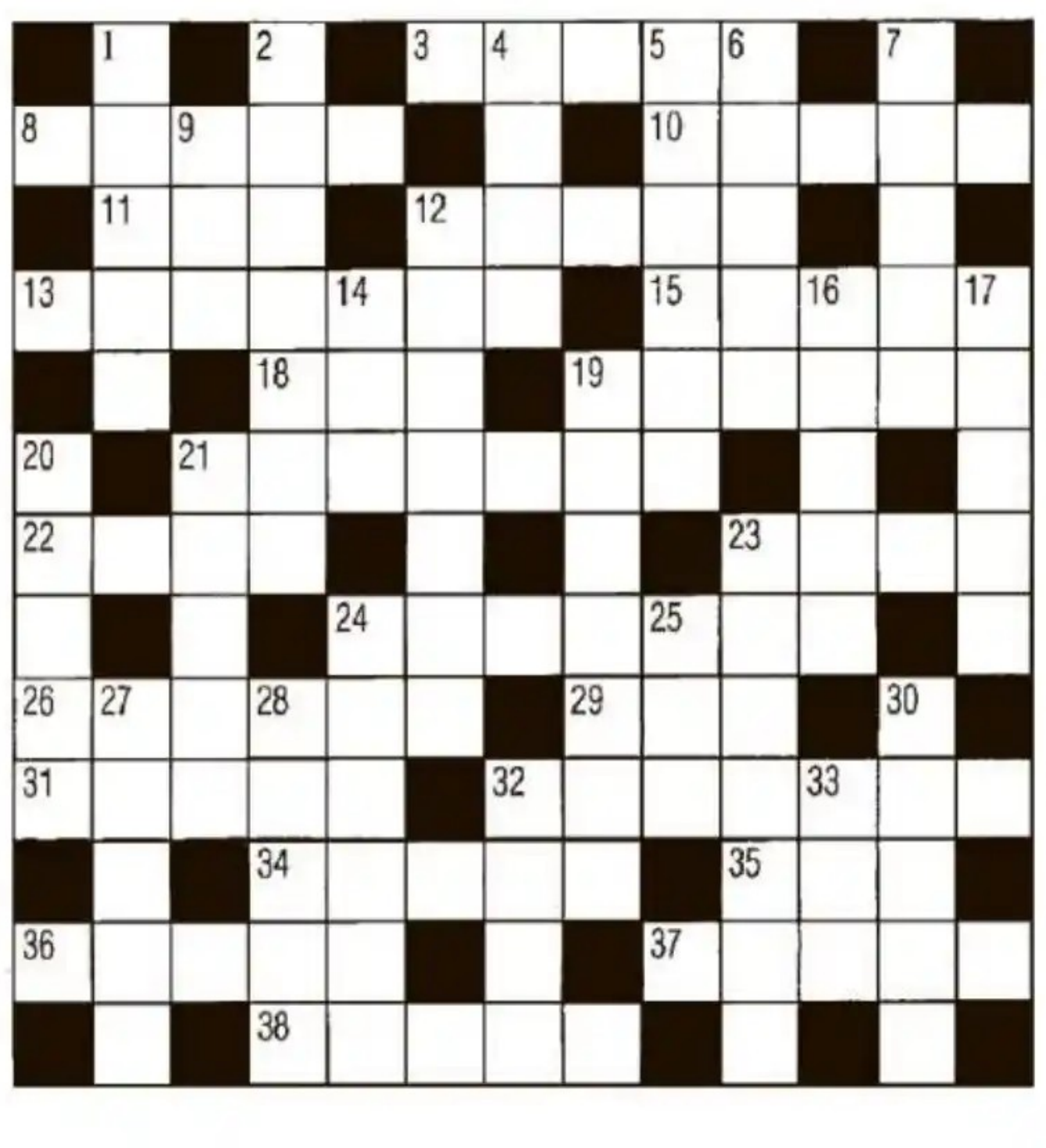
Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: GROUT LEAVE BRIGHT NINETY
Answer: When the mother gave birth mid-flight at 30,000 feet, the baby was — AIRBORNE

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12398



ACROSS
3 Explosion (5)
8 Conspiracy (5)
10 Fertile spot (5)
11 Groove (3)
12 Jeans fabric (5)
13 Permits, tolerates (7)
15 Post off (5)
18 Managed (3)
19 Former currency (6)
21 Afternoon show (7)
22 Sully (4)
23 Public pool (4)
24 Shortage (7)
26 Insight (6)
29 Small feline mammal (3)
31 Tree sap (5)
32 Cautious (7)
34 Senior member (5)
35 To free (3)
36 Moroccan capital (5)
37 Detests (5)
38 Chairs (5)

DOWN
1 Farm buildings (5)
2 Unstudied (7)
4 Fibs (4)
5 Private evening party (6)
6 Domesticates (5)
7 Finger or toe (5)
9 Unopened flower (3)
12 Inhabitant (7)
14 Rodent (3)
16 Deserve (5)
17 Sharply hooked claw (5)
19 Aquatic bird (7)
20 Academy Award (5)
21 Take away (5)
23 Word for word (7)
24 Indicate, designate (6)
25 Vehicle (3)
27 Tree type (5)
28 Legendary king (5)
30 Naked figures (5)
32 US coin (4)
33 In good health (3)

CRYPTIC

ACROSS
3 Fit possibly to pass muster initially? (5)
8 Draw the conclusion there's no end to the fire! (5)
10 Thanks, boy, for the stories (5)
11 Chap in the hospital forecourt (3)
12 A snooker rest? (5)
13 The fish that gathers the school? (7)
15 Drive back and swim round the pierhead (5)
18 She's short of salt (3)
19 A corny serial, we hear (6)
21 Great Khan who lost heart when the hinges broke (7)
22 Promise of news? (4)
23 Dignified in ecumenical matters (4)
24 Possibly able to sound full of menace (7)
26 Barefaced? (6)
29 A bit of a nightmare can spoil things (3)
31 Metal points, evidently (5)
32 Crazy bunch? (7)
34 Heavenly performers? (5)
35 If you live to tango, it's chancy (3)
36 Critical when abbreviated in notes (5)
37 Go nicely in a curve round a corner (5)
38 Farewell to France (5)

DOWN
1 Being hunted, one imagines, breaks ranks (5)
2 Official accustomed to being denied (7)
4 Seem pleased, yet turn up with a growl (4)
5 Arranging asters looks hard (6)
6 Manufacturer offering no choice? (5)
7 Mythical charmer never quite dear to me (5)
9 She may be a bit of a fool (3)
12 A foreigner like Poirot (7)
14 All you need for frying (3)
16 Plead to play the piano part (5)
17 Am all upset by a backward beast (5)
19 Locations for projected productions (7)
20 Once popular dancing turn (5)
21 Sound organ composition (5)
23 A seaman in cruel torment can be helped (7)
24 Beaten by the top man (6)
25 Noisy one, this supporter? (3)
27 Strike a companion as being a snag (5)
28 Figure to cook eats for a woman (5)
30 Where, in India, dad could have got a tan (5)
32 The cheese that broke Herbie's heart (4)
33 Born in Nine Elms (3)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 2676

ACROSS: 1 Tear gas, 5 Sellout, 9 College, 10 Equator, 11 Flash, 12 To the life, 13 Lithuania, 15 Bleat, 16 Shred, 18 Take after, 21 In general, 24 Fraud, 25 Immerse, 26 Aquatic, 27 Gunnery, 28 Natural.

DOWN: 1 Tactful, 2 At least, 3 Greyhound, 4 Spent, 5 Sweet-talk, 6 Louse, 7 Outline, 8 Torment, 14 Notoriety, 15 Bear fruit, 16 Shining, 17 Regimen, 19 Tractor, 20 Radical, 22 Nerve, 23 Learn.

◆SU-DO-KU-6884◆

				5		4		3
				8		2	6	
					2	5	9	
3		1		9	5			
	6						2	
			2	7		1		9
	1	6	7					
	8	9		2				
2		4		1				

hard

SOLUTION TO 6883

4	1	7	5	3	8	9	2	6
2	5	8	1	6	9	7	4	3
9	6	3	7	4	2	8	5	1
1	8	5	9	2	4	6	3	7
3	7	9	6	8	5	2	1	4
6	4	2	3	1	7	5	8	9
8	2	6	4	9	3	1	7	5
7	3	1	2	5	6	4	9	8
5	9	4	8	7	1	3	6	2

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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A_1	A_1	D_2	E_1	C_3	E_1	H_4	5th Letter Triple
S_1	A_1	I_1	G_2	T_1	N_1		
L_1	A_1	L_1	P_3	N_1	E_1	A_1	Triple Word Score
A_1	A_1	G_2	S_1	L_1	Y_4	S_1	

RACK 1
RACK 2
RACK 3
RACK 4

PAR SCORE 35-45
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

R_1	E_1	A_1	L_1	I_1	S_1	T_1	RACK 1 =	71
R_1	I_1	V_4	A_1	L_1	R_1	Y_4	RACK 2 =	89
I_1	D_2	Y_4	L_1	L_1	I_1	C_3	RACK 3 =	89
C_3	U_1	L_1	T_1	U_1	R_1	E_1	RACK 4 =	77
H_4	A_1	R_1	S_1	H_4	E_1	R_1	RACK 5 =	89

PAR SCORE 270-275
JUDD'S TOTAL 415

HITORI-3338

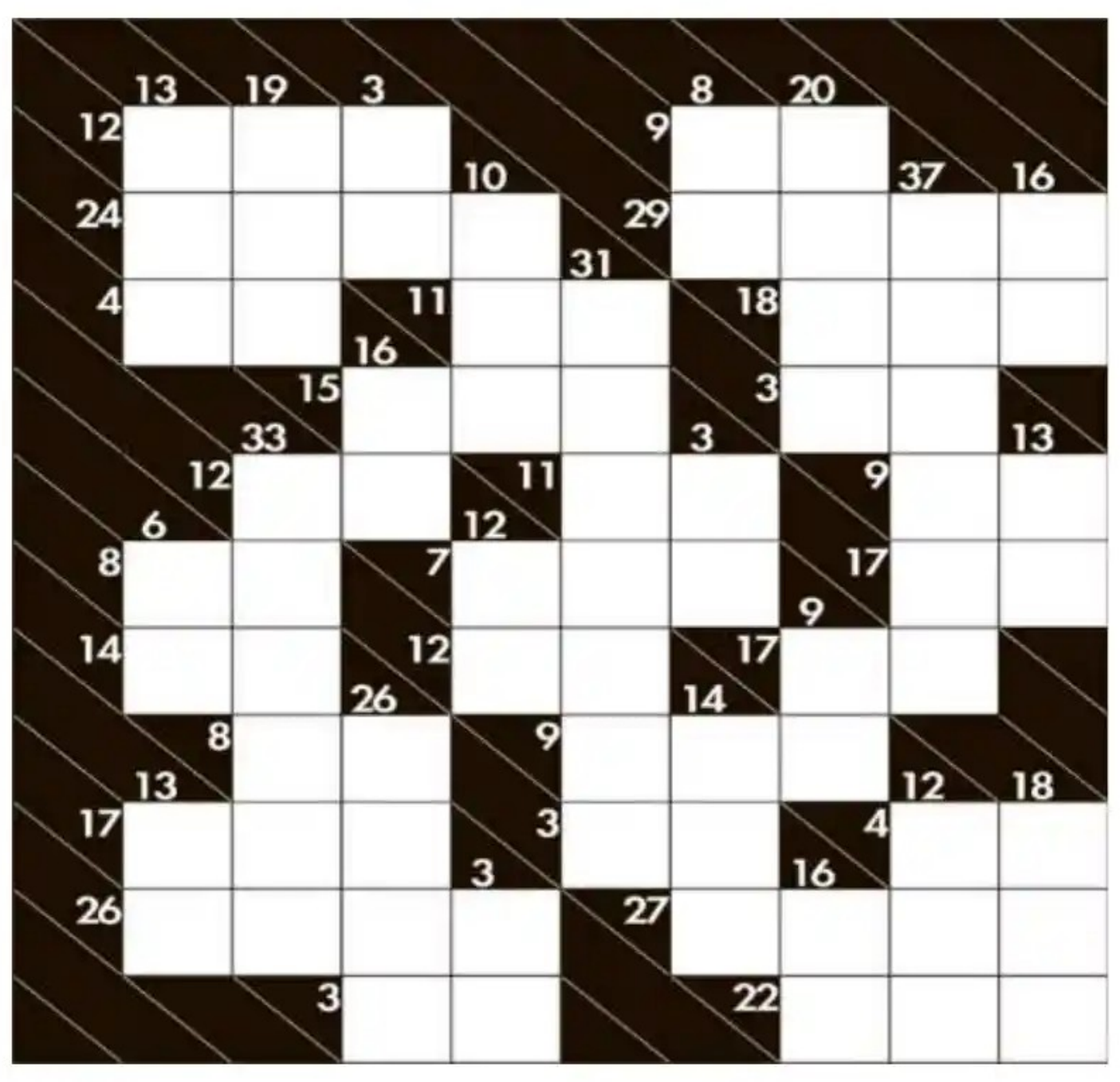
7	1	5	2	1	3	1	6
6	3	7	4	8	1	5	3
8	3	4	3	1	1	6	2
3	8	2	5	1	3	7	4
1	1	7	1	3	2	1	8
2	6	3	1	2	5	8	7
2	1	1	7	5	4	3	3
3	4	1	6	1	7	3	1

SOLUTION TO 3337

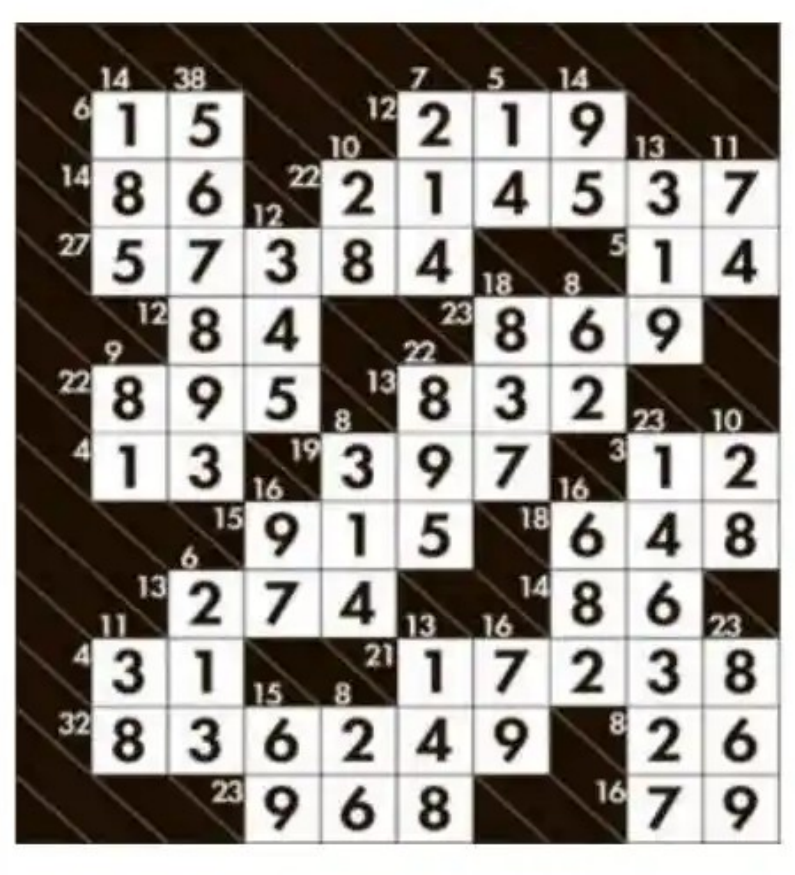
4	7	1	■	8	5	■	6
1	■	5	6	4	■	7	2
2	5	4	■	7	3	1	■
6	■	3	8	1	2	■	5
■	2	■	3	6	7	5	8
5	4	7	2	■	8	6	■
3	■	8	■	5	4	2	1
8	6	■	5	3	1	■	7

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

KAKURO- 3338



SOLUTION TO 3337



To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3891

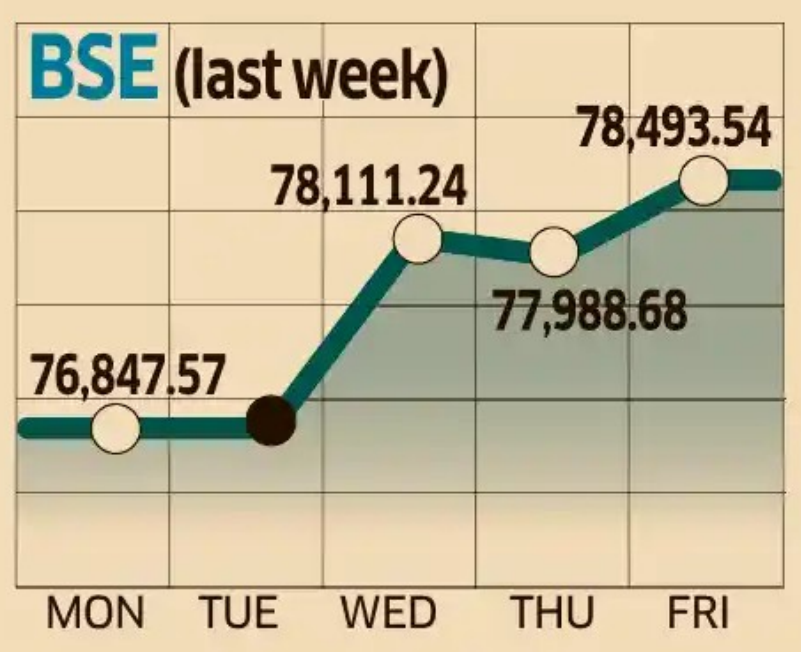
		4			3			
6			8	2		1	5	
	9	6			5			
		2		7	8		6	
								8
			6	3				
		8		4		2	1	
			2					

SOLUTION TO 3890

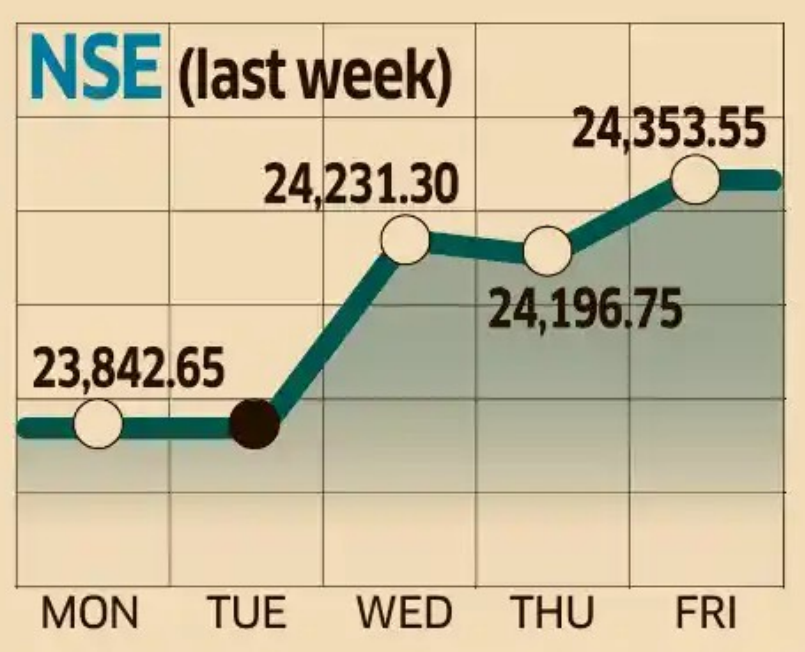
5	3	1	2	7	8	4	9	6
8	4	2	9	3	6	5	1	7
6	7	9	5	1	4	2	8	3
4	5	7	6	9	3	8	2	1
3	2	6	1	8	5	7	4	9
9	1	8	4	2	7	3	6	5
2	8	5	3	6	9	1	7	4
1	9	4	7	5	2	6	3	8
7	6	3	8	4	1	9	5	2

To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

BSE (last week)



NSE (last week)



*Data as of Apr 17 *Markets were closed on Tuesday, in observance of Ambedkar Jayanti

TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
ADANIPORTS	6.64%	M&M	-1.91%
ETERNAL	5.14%	MARUTI	-1.89%
POWERGRID	5.11%	BAJFINANCE	-1.70%
TECHM	4.96%	HDFCBANK	-1.30%
TRENT	4.78%	BHARTIARTL	-1.25%

TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
ADANIPORTS	6.65%	HEROMOTOCO	-4.32%
ADANIENT	6.30%	EICHER MOTO	-3.16%
ETERNAL	5.15%	MARUTI	-1.87%
TMPV	5.11%	MAHI & MAHI	-1.83%
POWERGRID	5.07%	BAJAJ FIN	-1.76%

Sensex (52-week)

Apr 17, 2025	Apr 17, 2026	
78,553.20	78,493.54	-0.08%

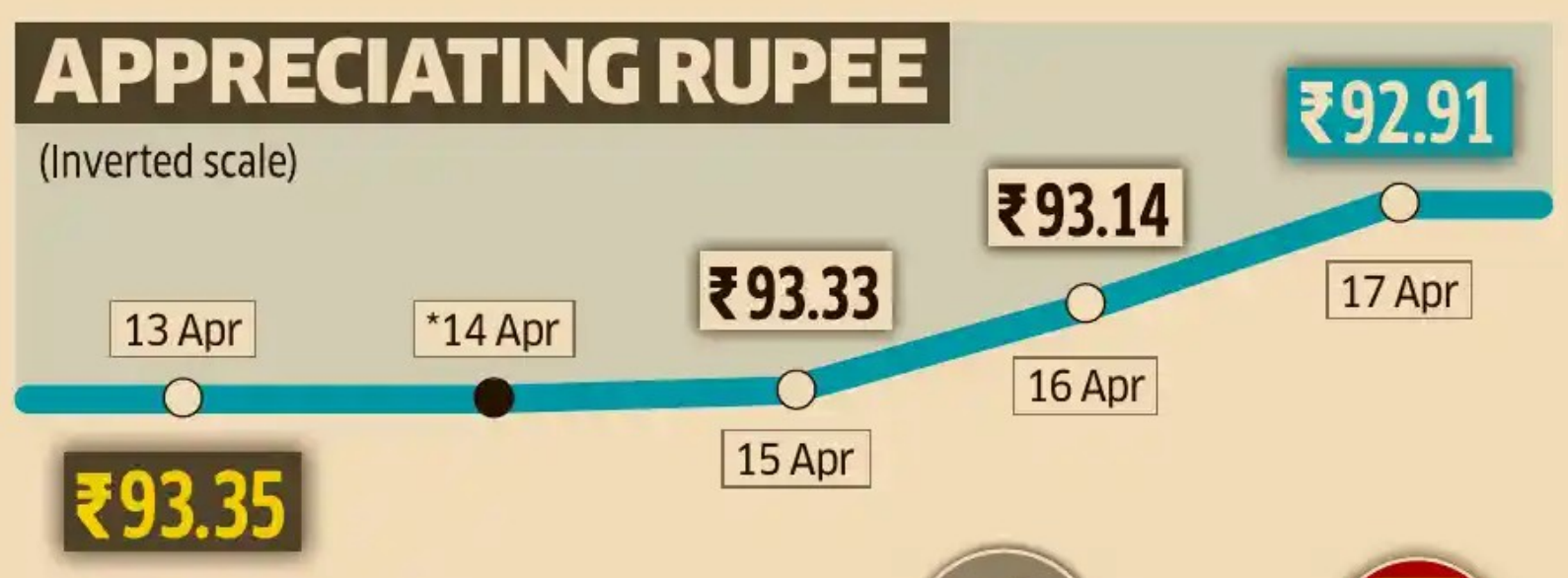
Nifty (52-week)

Apr 17, 2025	Apr 17, 2026	
23,851.65	24,353.55	2.10%

10-year Bond yield 6.90%

APPRECIATING RUPEE

(Inverted scale)



*Markets were closed on Apr 14, in observance of Ambedkar Jayanti

Exchange Rates*

Dollar	₹92.91
Pound	₹125.27
Euro	₹109.19
SGD	₹73.16
Yen (100 units)	₹58.14

*Price at which banks sell

Crude Oil Rate ($ per barrel)

BRENT CRUDE

$90.38*

-9.07%

*Rate as of Apr 17

Bengaluru fuel pump price* (Retail)

Petrol*	₹102.96	₹0.04% ↑
Diesel*	₹90.99	₹0.00% ↔

*Rates as of Apr 18 #Rate change compared with yesterday

Commodity watch

COFFEE

Category	Rate (Rs per 50 kg)*
Arabica Parchment	₹23000 - 23650
Arabica Cherry	₹13000 - 14700
Robusta Parchment	₹17500 - 17800
Robusta Cherry	₹9100 - 10200

*Rates as on Apr 15

Other Commodities

Silkworm cocoon (Rs per kg)*

Bivoltine (BV)	₹635
Cross Breed (CB)	₹680

*Average rates as on Apr 17

Oil price volatility lends EVs a strategic charge in India

As crude surges due to the West Asia war, consumers and businesses rethink mobility, eyeing electric vehicles for cost and energy security

HRITHIK KIRAN BAGADE
BENGALURU, DHNS

The recent surge in oil prices, widely seen as a domino effect of escalating tensions in West Asia, has created uncertainty around fuel costs. This has raised concerns about the smooth functioning of mass transport systems, personal vehicles, and airlines, prompting a search for alternatives. In this context, electric mobility is emerging as a potential solution to mitigate some of the risks associated with fuel dependence. While expert views vary, there is broad agreement on the strategic role of electric vehicles (EVs) in sustainability and energy security.

In early March, following the US and Israel attacks on Iran, Brent crude first surged past $110 per barrel amid fears of supply disruptions through the Strait of Hormuz — a chokepoint carrying over 20% of global oil. By mid-to-late March, prices repeatedly touched or exceeded $110 due to strikes on energy infrastructure and supply concerns. As of April 19, Brent crude was trading in the $90-$100 range.

On April 8, news of a two-week US-Iran ceasefire and the reopening of Hormuz led to a sharp drop in oil prices, with crude falling about 15% in futures trade as supply concerns eased. Iran had said the strait would be fully open to shipping, raising hopes of smoother flows. However, tensions soon resurfaced, with reports of disruptions and vessel incidents, making the route uncertain again. As a result, oil prices remain volatile — falling on positive news, but rising quickly with any disruption. The episode underscores India's vulnerability due to its heavy dependence on imported fuel.

India imports 85-90% of its crude oil (about 5 million bpd), making it highly dependent on global markets. It is the world's third-largest oil importer and consumer, with over half of imports passing through Hormuz.

At the same time, the country's vehicle market remains enormous. Total registrations reached around 28 million in 2025, dominated by two-wheelers, while EVs still account for a small share of sales, with about 8% penetration. However, rising fuel costs are nudging sentiment in favour of electrification.

Experts note a clear connection between oil shocks and EV adoption. The conflict has disrupted global oil supply and pushed prices sharply higher. When petrol gets expensive, EVs suddenly look cheaper to run over time, they say. Sustained high fuel costs may shift consumer behaviour, while EVs also provide strategic benefits. EVs reduce dependence on volatile oil regions. In 2025 alone, EVs cut about 1.7 million bpd of oil demand, according to Ember. Policymakers are increasingly framing EVs as energy security tools, not just climate solutions.

Globally, roughly 79% of people live in oil-importing countries, making economies vulnerable to price spikes. Ember estimates that every $10 rise in crude prices adds around $160 billion to global import bills annually, with Asia particularly exposed. Electrifying transport could cut global fossil fuel imports by about a third, potentially saving $600 billion per year.

"Due to their high efficiency, EVs are a powerful tool to reduce fossil fuel dependence," Ember reported, noting that EVs use roughly 80% of the energy they consume, compared to about 20% for ICE vehicles. "This is a major turning point. Emerging markets are leading the shift to electric mobility, recognising cleaner air and reduced fossil fuel dependence. India is one such market," Euan Graham, Electricity and Data Analyst at Ember, said in a report.

Others also view the current oil volatility as a structural inflection point. Zelio E-Mobility Co-founder and MD Kunal Arya said, "It is pushing policy thinking beyond climate into energy security. Electrification, especially electric two-wheelers, reduces India's exposure to imported fuel risk. While incentives were already in motion, this environment strengthens the case for faster execution and wider reach."

On the ground, fuel price sensitivity is translating into consumer interest, particularly in semi-urban markets where running costs matter most. Zelio E-Mobility reports increased inquiries since late February and is responding by scaling dealer presence, improving battery efficiency, and strengthening supply chains.

S&P Global notes that buyers may increasingly consider hybrid or EV options to hedge against fuel price volatility, though any rise in vehicle costs may appear gradually.

Enterprise adoption

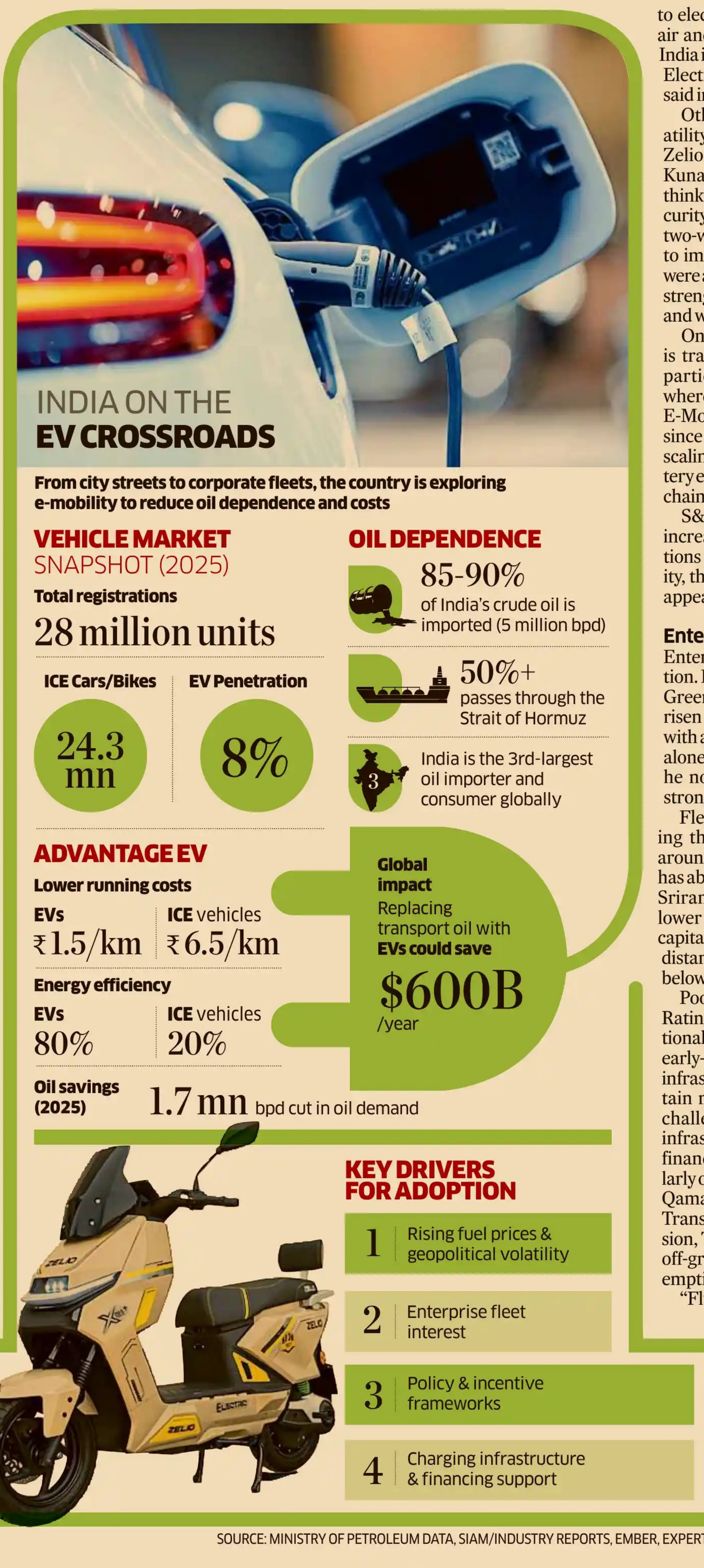
Enterprises are also accelerating adoption. Hari Krishna, Founder and CEO of Green Drive Mobility, said demand has risen sharply, particularly in Bengaluru, with adoption up 30-40%. "Price shocks alone cannot drive sustained adoption," he noted, highlighting the need for a strong EV ecosystem.

Fleet operators are closely monitoring the shift. Routematic, which runs around 8,000 cars across multiple cities, has about 10% of its fleet electrified. CEO Sriram Kannan explained, "EVs offer lower running costs, but high upfront capital remains a barrier. The break-even distance is around 2,500 km. Anything below this, EVs remain expensive."

Poonam Upadhyay, Director at Crisil Ratings, emphasised affordability. "National EV penetration is around 5%, still early-stage. Policy stability and charging infrastructure rollout are critical to sustain momentum," she said. Structural challenges such as limited charging infrastructure, high upfront costs, and financing gaps slow adoption, particularly outside major urban centres. Sharif Qamar, Fellow and Associate Director, Transport and Urban Governance Division, TERI, suggested measures such as off-grid megawatt charging and toll exemptions for commercial EVs.

"Fluctuating global oil prices are pushing more people toward EVs. In India, when petrol prices rise by 10-15%, EV interest typically increases by 20-25%, especially in cities where savings are clearer. However, faster implementation of policies like PM E-DRIVE and FAME is needed to boost EV adoption and expand charging infrastructure," said Bharat Bala, Builder and CEO, AMP EV.

Kannan added that policy support must go beyond incentives to address ecosystem fundamentals, including manufacturing scale, charging network density, service infrastructure, and financing models. Experts caution that if oil prices fall quickly, the EV advantage could weaken. The current surge reinforces the case for EVs as a hedge against fuel volatility, though adoption is likely to increase gradually rather than spike immediately.



INDIA ON THE
EV CROSSROADS

From city streets to corporate fleets, the country is exploring e-mobility to reduce oil dependence and costs

VEHICLE MARKET
SNAPSHOT (2025)

Total registrations
28 million units

ICE Cars/Bikes	EV Penetration
24.3 mn	8%

OIL DEPENDENCE

85-90% of India's crude oil is imported (5 million bpd)

50%+ passes through the Strait of Hormuz

India is the 3rd-largest oil importer and consumer globally

ADVANTAGE EV

Lower running costs

EVs	ICE vehicles
₹1.5/km	₹6.5/km

Energy efficiency

EVs	ICE vehicles
80%	20%

Oil savings (2025) 1.7 mn bpd cut in oil demand

Global impact
Replacing transport oil with **EVs could save**
$600B
/year

KEY DRIVERS FOR ADOPTION

1. Rising fuel prices & geopolitical volatility
2. Enterprise fleet interest
3. Policy & incentive frameworks
4. Charging infrastructure & financing support

SOURCE: MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM DATA, SIAM/INDUSTRY REPORTS, EMBER, EXPERTS

Vembu Tech plans to invest Rs 100 cr in Indian market

The investments will go into R&D, and sales & marketing

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

Bengaluru, DHNS: Vembu Technologies, a leading player in the backup and disaster recovery market for SMEs, is planning to invest Rs 50 crore to Rs 100 crore in the Indian market over the next three years. The investments will go into expanding R&D, sales & marketing and brand building.

Sekar Vembu, Founder & CEO of Vembu Technologies told *DH* that in India, the size of the data backup and recovery market is about Rs 5,000-10,000 crore. "Globally, it is about a $10-12 billion market, and is growing at around 20-25% per annum. In India, it is expected to grow even faster," he said. The company is focusing on the Indian market and targets Rs 500 crore in revenues from this market alone, in the next five years.

Sekar Vembu

Vembu said cyber attacks are increasing currently that there is a lot of awareness around ransomware. "Earlier, companies used to get some disk or user error messages when data got deleted. But now, cyber attacks are increasing and companies are taking backup seriously. I expect this market to grow faster in the next 5-10 years," he said.

Given the present conflict in West Asia that has impacted data centre infrastructure, Vembu said they have received a few requests from the region about backup and even companies from India approached them for backup. "At least five customers have contacted us from West Asia, and we got two enquiries from Chennai as they want sophisticated backup solutions," he said.

Backup is not just copying data from one disk to another, there is a big process around it, he said. "The worst case is when a data centre itself gets burned down or becomes a target of some attacks. This is what we are seeing in some data centres in West Asia. There are cyber attacks, ransomware attacks, and hardware failure. These are usual things that keep happening in any data centre. Irrespective of whatever security one has, things can go wrong," he said.

Sophisticated customers usually take a backup to a local disk, and then some of them do a tape, and the tape is taken offsite.

"An archive to a tape, and then the tape is taken offsite and stored elsewhere, not in the same location. Sometimes, you also have a third copy, where the backup data is stored in another data centre at an offsite location or a cloud, a public cloud like Amazon or others, sometimes even one's own private cloud somewhere else. Typically, a backup process will have three copies — one stored onsite, another stored in tape, and the other one in a cloud," he explained.

Vembu, who has over three decades of experience in building global enterprise software products from India, said the company's product BDRShield provides each stakeholder the tools they need to protect data, deliver value, and stay resilient. According to him, the BFSI segment is the No.1 backup market, followed by retail companies.

Anthropic new models: Firms say client interest rises with new capabilities

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

Bengaluru, DHNS: In February, when AI firm Anthropic released its latest tool, IT stocks saw heavy selling pressures as investors worried over AI competition for IT services firms, and the same fear continues now as Anthropic released Claude Opus 4.7, its latest model that is an improvement in advanced software engineering with particular gains on the hardest coding tasks that previously needed close supervision.

Analysts are of the view that this could pressure valuations, and IT services firms could face significant pressure. Early April, Anthropic and partners announced Project Glasswing, and that launch partners will use Mythos Preview for defensive security work and share what they learn so the whole industry can benefit.

Motilal Oswal Financial Services said Mythos builds on big gains in capabilities on Opus, which, released in February 2026, sent most tech/SaaS stocks tumbling down. "While this release may not have the same impact on stocks, it further expands the list of things AI can do better than humans — coding, ERP, and cybersecurity," it said.

Last week, TCS CEO and MD K Krithivasan said clients are curious to know about expanding capabilities of all the models. They also want to leverage their models to achieve both productivity and business value chain reimagination. "Is it because post Anthropic...? I won't say that. As the model capability improves, there'll be more interest in seeing how they can leverage," he said.

TCS COO Aarthi Subramanian said clients' interest and demand actually increases with new capabilities coming out of the model providers.

Whether such models make clients defer IT spending...? Krithivasan said "no", and that the company's clients are quite interested in leveraging it. "They know that this (models) will be constantly evolving. And there is no major benefit in waiting for the next best model to arrive. Clients are willing to invest now, and we are helping them in building that architecture so that they can exploit and leverage the models as they come in," he explained.

Cognizant CEO takes home Rs 96 crore salary in 2025

BENGALURU, DHNS

Nasdaq-listed Cognizant CEO Ravi Kumar S took home nearly Rs 96 crore ($10.7 mn) in 2025, though his target direct compensation was $19 million.

According to the company's filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), his realised compensation includes base pay, ACI (Annual Cash Incentive) apart from PSUs (Performance Share Units), and RSUs (Restricted Stock Units).

"The Compensation Committee, at its meeting in February 2025, evaluated Mr. Kumar's prior year performance and the updated information provided by Pay Governance for CEOs in the Company's peer group. Based on these considerations, the Compensation Committee determined that Mr. Kumar's target direct compensation for 2025 should be increased to $19,000,000 (18% increase vs. 2024) to reflect his 2024 performance as CEO. The specific components of Mr. Kumar's 2025 target direct compensation were comprised of: (i) base salary of $1,300,000 (8% increase vs. 2024), (ii) ACI target of $2,600,000 (8% increase vs. 2024), (iii) PSUs of $9,100,000 (21% increase vs. 2024) and (iv) RSUs of $6,000,000 (20% increase vs. 2024)," the company said in its filings.

However, his realised compensation was significantly lower than his target direct compensation primarily because his 2025 PSU grants are scheduled to vest, subject to the satisfaction of performance criteria, in future periods, it added.

His 2025 realised compensation consisted principally of his base salary, 2025 ACI award payout at 169% of target and quarterly vestings of RSUs in the aggregate amount of about $4,988,000.

Ravi Kumar S

In 2024, the CEO took home nearly Rs 70 crore ($8.2 million), and in 2023, his compensation stood at $22.6 million, due to one-time equity award that was granted to him during his appointment.

Ravi Kumar was appointed CEO of Cognizant in January 2023. The company's CFO Jatin Dalal's realised compensation came in at $6.6 million, above the target of $6 million.

Among IT services firms, HCLTech CEO and MD C Vijayakumar is the highest paid CEO. Last year, in its annual report, the company said Vijayakumar will receive over 71% hike in his remuneration at Rs 154 crore ($18.60 million) for FY26. In FY25, the CEO took home close to Rs 95 crore ($10.85 million).

Cognizant, which employs over 3,50,000 people, in 2025, laid out a three-vector AI strategy, which includes: using AI to accelerate software development and reduce technical debt, industrialising AI from pilots into enterprise grade systems, and agentifying the enterprise by creating "agentic capital" that can tackle objectives that traditional software is largely unable to reach. The CEO in the annual report mentioned that the company delivered a record full-year revenue of over $21 billion, with 7% growth or 6.4% growth in constant currency. "Importantly, our growth was profitable. We expanded operating margin and delivered earnings per share growth even as we funded significant advancements in our platforms, partnerships and intellectual property — including opening our newest AI Lab in Bengaluru and adding new IP to our patent portfolio," the CEO said.

Simplified buyback rules: Know your tax outgo

PRABHAKAR K S
FOUNDER & CEO,
SHREE TAX CHAMBERS

Last week, Wipro approved its sixth and largest-ever share buyback programme, worth Rs 15,000 crore, involving up to 60 crore equity shares with a face value of Rs 2 each at Rs 250 per equity share. The proposal represents about 5.7% of the total paid-up capital. Unlike Infosys, its founder, Azim Premji, and the promoter group are participating in it. As of December 31, 2025, they hold 72.63% stake and expect to complete the whole exercise in the first quarter of 2026-27.

Now, come to the changed tax rules. What has changed in buyback taxation rules effective from April 1, 2026? Whether the promoters bear additional taxes? What does the new tax regime mean for other investors? Let us examine these issues.

What is buyback of shares?

To dissect, it is the company's act of purchasing its own shares from the existing shareholders. A company is allowed to use its free reserves, securities premium, and the proceeds of issue of any shares for the said purpose. Advantages for the company, it will improve the earnings per share, return on capital and net worth, and a positive market perception. For the shareholders, they can expect an easy exit with a higher premium - in the Wipro case, as on April 16, implying a 19% premium on the closing price of Rs. 210.15 per equity share - compared to market offers, subject to applicable taxes. Those who retain can expect long-term wealth creation due to a change in shareholding pattern, but over a period of time.

Tax rules up to March 2026

The Union Budget 2024-25, to treat both buyback and dividend payouts in the same manner, introduced certain changes to the buyback taxation. Accordingly, the income from buyback of shares by companies shall be chargeable in the hands of the recipient investor as 'dividend income'. In other words, shareholders were compelled to pay taxes on the full buyback amount as per the income tax slabs applicable to them, which was up to 30% plus cess in some cases.

For shareholders, the associated cost incurred on purchasing such shares are allowed as a capital loss and adjusted against other capital gains. The full consideration received by such shareholder for the computation of gain shall be deemed to be 'nil'. Due to that, the cost of acquisition of such shares would generate a capital loss in the hands of the shareholder. No expense was allowed as a deduction in the hands of shareholders.

Thus, the buyback offers on or after October 1, 2024 and up to March 31, 2026, shall be governed by the old buyback taxation rules. For instance, Fairchem Organics Ltd. and Go Fashion (India) Ltd. have completed their buybacks in February, 2026.

Tax rules from April 2026

The Union budget 2026-27 has brought back the buyback taxation to the capital gains system, with effect from April 1, 2026. As per the Income Tax Department, shareholders other than promoters shall be subject to tax at 12.5% - after annual exemption of Rs. 1.25 lakh - in case of long-term capital gains, listed and unlisted, and 20% on short-term listed and applicable rate on short-term unlisted.

A twist for promoters: To plug the tax arbitrage, the latest Union Budget has introduced a 'Special Additional Tax' on promoters to level the playing field. Accordingly, capital gains will be taxed effectively at 22% roughly in the case of corporate promoters and 30% roughly for non-corporate promoters. The payment of buyback consideration to resident and non-resident shareholders is subject to TDS at 10% and 20%, respectively.

A comparison: Now, buyback proceeds will be treated as capital gains under the head 'Income from Capital Gains'. Earlier, it was treated as 'Deemed Dividend' and taxed under the head 'Income from Other Sources'. Now, only actual profits, i.e. sale price minus purchase price, are subject to tax at 12.5% in the case of long-term and 20% in the case of short-term. Earlier, the entire proceeds were subject to tax as per applicable tax slabs. Now, it is possible to claim the cost of acquisition from the sale price itself. Earlier, it was treated as a capital loss. Wipro Ltd., Aurobindo Pharma Ltd., Cyient Ltd and other upcoming buyback offers shall be governed by the new taxation rules.

Is it a reduction of capital?

On April 7, the Delhi High Court, relying on the principles of company law, income-tax law and common prudence, settled a controversial issue. It was held that the buyback of shares constitutes a reduction of capital rather than an acquisition of an asset for tax purposes.

The new buyback taxation rule is simple and more beneficial to the small shareholders. For promoters, the tax liability will largely remain similar if it is taxed as a dividend.

TOP PICKS

The data is sourced from Motilal Oswal Financial Services Limited

Mtar Technologies (ID: MTARTECH)	Upside **+24%****	Last close ₹4,857	Target: **₹6,000***	BUY
Bharat Electronics (ID: BEL)	Upside **+12%****	Last close ₹463	Target: **₹520***	BUY
Max Healthcare (ID: MAXHEALTH)	Upside **+23%****	Last close ₹1,007	Target: **₹1,238***	BUY
Titan (ID: TITAN)	Upside **+15%****	Last close ₹4,525	Target: **₹5,200***	BUY
JSW Steel (ID: JSWSTEEL)	Upside **+10%****	Last close ₹1,240	Target: **₹1,360***	BUY

* Target price has been calculated on the basis of fundamentals ** Upside refers to more value stock is expected to generate than its current price

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Air India to retrofit another 25 B787 aircraft

BENGALURU, DHNS: Air India will be retrofitting 25 additional B787 aircraft over the next year, two of which are already undergoing the process, as part of a $400 million investment to modernise the airline's legacy fleet. The B787 retrofit programme has been jointly conceptualised and executed with Boeing, ensuring the highest standards of quality and safety in the aircraft and throughout the process.

Upon full completion of the B787 retrofit programme by 2027, Air India aims to significantly upgrade the onboard product and passenger experience on over 300 flights per week to destinations across the United Kingdom, Europe, and Australia. Air India will subsequently retrofit 13 of its legacy B777-300ER aircraft, the company said in a statement.

This initiative forms a key part of Air India's broader fleet modernisation efforts, delivering elevated comfort, privacy, and entertainment options while reinforcing the airline's position as a premium global carrier.

Air India, on Sunday, unveiled its first retrofitted, twin-aisle B787-8 (registered VT-ANT), marking the successful completion of a nose-to-tail cabin refresh of the first of 26 B787 aircraft.

The aircraft, which received comprehensive interior upgrades at Boeing's Modification Centre in Victorville, California, was subsequently painted in Air India's striking new livery at AeroPro, an FAA Part-145 certified aircraft paint facility in San Bernardino, California.

As part of the retrofit, the aircraft interiors were completely reconfigured, transforming it from a two-class layout previously to a modern three-class configuration now with the installation of brand-new seats and inflight entertainment (IFE) system, and bringing the aircraft in line with Air India's latest widebody product standards, as seen on its new bespoke Boeing 787-9 inducted in January 2026.

You built wealth, but will your family ever find it?

Next generation of financial planning must focus beyond just building wealth

GURUSHANT H

India is witnessing an unprecedented era of wealth creation. From first-generation entrepreneurs and salaried professionals to startup founders and investors, millions of Indians are building financial assets at a scale never seen before.

Yet, beneath this success lies a silent and often overlooked problem: families frequently struggle to locate, access, or claim the wealth that has been built for them.

Most financial conversations today revolve around how to earn more, invest better, or beat market returns. Very few conversations focus on an equally important question: *Will your family be able to find and access your wealth when they need it most?*

Across households, financial assets are spread across bank accounts, mutual funds, insurance policies, retirement schemes, digital platforms, and physical investments such as property and gold. Over time, records get scattered, nominee details remain outdated, and critical financial information often resides with a single individual.

When an unexpected life event occurs, families are suddenly left navigating a maze of institutions, documents, and legal procedures. What should have been a straightforward transfer of wealth becomes a stressful and time-consuming process.

This is not a rare occurrence. Large amounts of financial assets across banks, insurance companies, and investment institutions remain unclaimed every year, simply because families are unaware of their existence or unable to complete the recovery process.

The lesson here is simple: Wealth creation without financial organisation is incomplete.

Financial preparedness today must go beyond investment portfolios. It must include asset discovery, nominee management, documentation, and clear communication with family members.

Individuals should ask themselves a few critical questions:

- Do I have a consolidated view of all my financial assets?
- Are my nominee details accurate and updated?
- Would my family know where to find my financial information if something happened to me?
- Have I documented my intentions regarding wealth distribution?

These are not complex financial strategies. They are basic but powerful steps that can protect families from confusion and hardship.

Technology is now making it possible to address these challenges more effectively. India's evolving digital financial infrastructure — from consent-based data frameworks to intelligent asset discovery systems — is enabling platforms to help individuals organise their financial lives in a structured and secure manner.

However, technology alone cannot solve the problem. What is equally important is a shift in mindset. We need to normalise conversations around financial transparency within families.

Money has traditionally been a private topic in many households. But silence around financial information can unintentionally create vulnerability for the very people we want to protect.

The next generation of financial planning must therefore focus not just on building wealth, but also on ensuring that wealth remains discoverable, accessible, and transferable across generations.

The true legacy individuals leave behind is not merely the assets they accumulate. It is the clarity and preparedness that allows their families to benefit from those assets without unnecessary stress or uncertainty.

In a rapidly-evolving financial world, perhaps the most important question we can ask ourselves is this: *If something happened to me tomorrow, would my family know where my wealth is — and how to access it?*

Answering that question today could make all the difference tomorrow.

(The writer is Founder and CEO of VealthX)

Mcap of 8 of top-10 most-valued firms surges by Rs 1.87 lakh crore

NEW DELHI, PTI: The combined market valuation of eight of the top-10 most-valued firms surged by Rs 1,87,497.45 crore in a holiday-shortened last week, with Bharti Airtel emerging as the biggest gainer, in line with a positive trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 943.29 points or 1.21%, and the NSE Nifty climbed 302.95 points or 1.25%.

"Markets ended the truncated week with notable gains, extending their uptrend for the second consecutive week, supported by easing geopolitical tensions and improving risk sentiment. Optimism surrounding a potential US-Iran peace agreement underpinned market confidence, while stable domestic fundamentals further aided momentum," Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The market valuation of Bharti Airtel jumped Rs 58,831.52 crore to Rs 11,25,125.21 crore. The valuation of LIC surged Rs 27,608.62 crore to Rs 5,32,691.31 crore.

WEEK AHEAD

Consolidation likely at higher levels

Broader markets likely to outperform amid earnings-driven opportunities and sector-specific momentum

SIDDHARTHA KHEMKA

Indian equities are likely to consolidate at higher levels this week, following a sharp 10% rally over the past ten trading sessions. The key monitorable remains the second round of diplomatic peace talks between the US and Iran, with the April 22 ceasefire deadline fast approaching. Broader markets are expected to remain vibrant and would continue to witness stock-specific action, driven by sectoral triggers and the ongoing Q4 results season.

The sustainability of the next leg of the rally will largely depend on developments in global geopolitics and macroeconomic stability. Results from major banks — HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, and Yes Bank — that reported over the weekend are likely to set the tone for the sector in the coming days. Key results expected this week include Shriram Finance, L&T Finance, Infosys, SBI Life, Tech Mahindra, and Nalco. Institutional flows will also remain a key monitorable, although a positive signal emerged last week with FIIs turning net buyers.

On the global front, the upcoming visit of South Korean President Lee Jae-myung to India from April 19–21, is likely to strengthen bilateral cooperation across key areas such as trade, shipbuilding, semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies. The visit is expected to lay the groundwork for achieving $50 billion in bilateral trade by 2030, while also accelerating negotiations to upgrade the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, thereby offering long-term tailwinds to sectors like manufacturing, capital goods, and technology.

US equity markets have staged a sharp recovery in recent weeks, with the S&P 500 touching a record high of 7,041 and gaining 3.5% last week alone. The rally has been supported by optimism around a potential ceasefire in West Asia and easing energy prices. The Nasdaq Composite settled at 24,102 on April 16—marking its 12th consecutive positive session, the longest winning streak since 2009—while the Dow Jones held steady near 48,578. As the Nasdaq and S&P 500 push deeper into record territory, the Dow has also turned positive for the year, recovering from the sharp 10% correction witnessed in March.

Indian equities also traded with a positive bias, with benchmark indices ending higher and the Nifty 50 gaining 1.3%. Broader markets outperformed, as the Nifty Midcap 100 and Smallcap 100 advanced 3.6% and 4.3%, respectively, indicating a pickup in risk appetite across segments. Sectorally, performance was broad-based. Nifty Energy (+4.6%) and Metal (+4.2%) emerged as the top gainers, supported by firm commodity prices and improved global cues, followed by Media (+3.8%), Realty (+3.6%) and FMCG (+3.0%), with FMCG benefiting from a rotation towards relatively resilient consumption plays amid rising inflation concerns. IT (+2.5%) and Infrastructure (+2.1%) also posted gains, aided by currency stability and continued capex traction, while Nifty Bank (+1.2%) saw modest upside on improving liquidity conditions and selective buying. Pharma (+1.5%) gained on defensive positioning and steady earnings visibility. Crude holding below $100/barrel added to the positive tone. The rupee firmed 28 paise to 92.86 against the dollar, supported by the improved risk tone and returning foreign flows.

External sector dynamics have shown some improvement, with India's merchandise trade deficit narrowing to $20.7 billion in March, supported by a decline in imports and a sequential recovery in exports. Strong services exports continue to provide a buffer, helping contain the current account deficit. However, given India's high dependence on energy imports, any spike in crude prices remains a key risk to the external balance and currency stability.

A key overhang for global markets remains the expiration of the two-week ceasefire between the US and Iran on April 22. Overall, while the near-term outlook suggests consolidation for headline indices, the underlying tone remains positive, with broader markets likely to outperform amid earnings-driven opportunities and sector-specific momentum.

(The writer is Head of Research, Wealth Management, MOFSL)

DH REVIEW

Nothing Phone (4a) Pro: Performer with standout design

ROHIT K V N
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Nothing Phone (4a) Pro series hit stores in India recently. It comes in three options — 8GB RAM + 128GB storage, 8GB RAM + 256GB storage, and 12GB RAM + 256GB storage — for Rs 39,999, Rs 42,999, and Rs 45,999, respectively.

Design, build quality and display

The premium Nothing Phone (4a) Pro takes a little inspiration from the premium Phone 3 (2025). Flaunting a triple camera module with Glyph Matrix display, the new phone has 137 individually-controllable micro-LEDs that offer a smart, expressive way to notify the user.

It supports several animations and even displays the caller names or who has messaged, along with Glyph Toys — a playful extension of Glyph Matrix, which brings quick tools such as Battery Indicator, Timer, Digital Clock, and more.

The device features the Essential Space key on the right side. When pressed, it opens Essential Space to offer the option to take instant notes. With an AI-based algorithm, it can also generate personalised suggestions, summaries, or action points.

Besides silver, it is available in black and pink colours.

However, the similarities between the Phone (4a) Pro and Phone 3 end there. The see-through back cover has been replaced with a unibody metallic enclosure made of aerospace-grade aluminium.

The device comes with an IP65 water-and-dust-resistant rating, meaning it can survive low-pressure water jets and moderate rain outdoors.

Additionally, the display is protected by Corning's Gorilla Glass 7i, and the company offers a free silicone case to safeguard the phone from getting cracked during an accidental fall.

On the front, it sports a 6.83-inch 1.5K (1260 x 2800p) flexible AMOLED display with 144Hz adaptive refresh rate, supports HDR10+ content, and offers up to 5,000 nits of peak brightness. The display is good for consuming multimedia content indoors.

The in-screen fingerprint works smoothly as well.

Performance

The Nothing Phone (4a) Pro houses a 4nm class Qualcomm Snapdragon 7 Gen 4 octa-core with Adreno 722 GPU, 8GB / 12GB LPDD5X RAM and 128GB / 256GB UFS 3.1 storage options, and a 5,400mAh battery.

The device can clock CPU speed up to 2.8GHz and easily handle generative AI applications — Gemini, ChatGPT, etc — and popular games available on the Google Play Store.

It also features a 5,300 mm² large vapour chamber to efficiently dissipate heat while performing heavy-duty tasks.

The phone runs Android 16-based Nothing OS 4.1 with a very clean UI, and has only Google's core applications and first-party utility tools.

With a full charge, the Phone (4a) is able to last an entire day under normal usage. It supports a 50W wired charger and can reach from zero to 100% in around an hour. The device also supports 7.5W reverse wired charging as well.

Photography

The Phone (4a) Pro features a triple camera module — main 50MP camera (with f/1.88 aperture, Optical Image Stabilisation), with an 8MP ultra-wide camera (with 120-degree field-of-view, f/2.2), and a 50MP periscope camera (with OIS, 7x in-sensor zoom, up to 140x hybrid zoom), with LED flash on the back.

The camera is powered by the TrueLens Engine 4 computational photography system and the Image Super Resolution (ISR) algorithm, which can capture Ultra XDR photos with sharp details of the subjects and the surrounding scenes under natural sunlight. In a low-lit environment too, it takes pretty neat pictures.

The device also supports several native AI-powered tools. Users can remove reflections, erase objects, and do more.

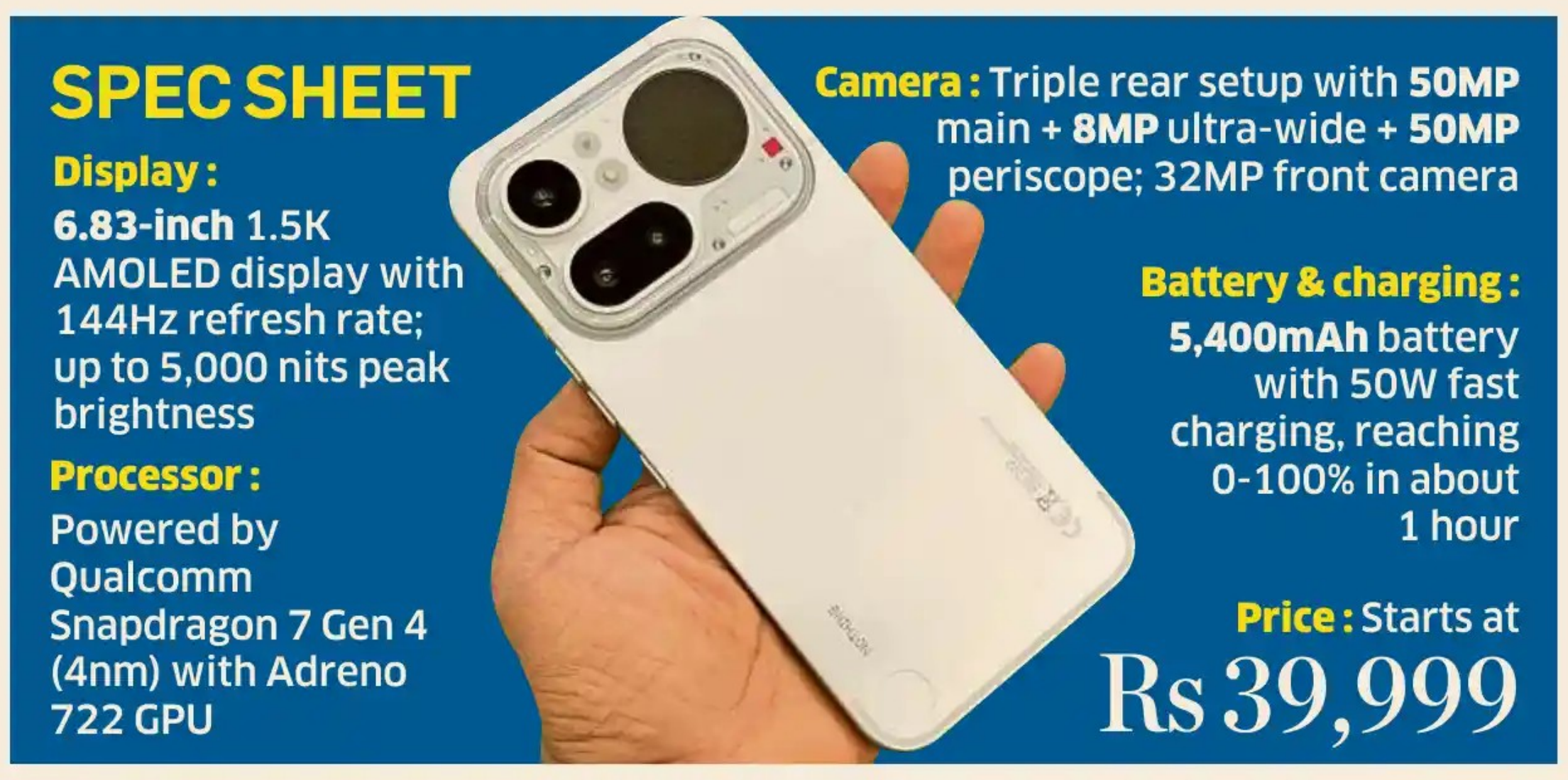
The digital zoom works fine with less loss of quality till 20X, beyond which, the photos begin to accumulate noise.

On the front, it houses a 32MP camera (with a 1/3.44-inch sensor, f/2.2).

Both the front and back cameras record decent-quality 4K videos at 30 fps.

Final thoughts

For its price, the Nothing Phone (4a) Pro delivers well on key parameters such as build quality, performance, camera hardware, and decent full-day battery life, and its design language makes it a standout among competitors.



SPEC SHEET

Display: **6.83-inch** 1.5K AMOLED display with 144Hz refresh rate; up to 5,000 nits peak brightness

Processor: Powered by Qualcomm Snapdragon 7 Gen 4 (4nm) with Adreno 722 GPU

Camera: Triple rear setup with **50MP** main + **8MP** ultra-wide + **50MP** periscope; 32MP front camera

Battery & charging: **5,400mAh** battery with 50W fast charging, reaching 0-100% in about 1 hour

Price: Starts at Rs 39,999

Conflict escalates: Tehran accuses Washington of violating a ceasefire agreement

Strait of Hormuz to stay closed until US blockade is lifted: Iran

TEHRAN/DUBAI, AGENCIES

Commuters make their way past a giant billboard of slain Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei at the Valiasr Square in Tehran on Sunday. The strategic Strait of Hormuz was again closed on April 19 in the stand-off between Iran and the United States. AFP

The Strait of Hormuz remained closed on Sunday in the stand-off between Iran and the US, with the Islamic Republic saying it would not reopen the crucial maritime trade route until the US ended its blockade of Iranian ports.

On Saturday, Iran, which had earlier announced it would allow shipping to pass through Hormuz, reversed course, accusing Washington of violating a ceasefire agreement by maintaining its own blockade of Iranian ports.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned that any attempt to pass through the strait without permission "will be considered cooperation with the enemy, and the offending vessel will be targeted".

After two Indian-registered ships reported being attacked on Saturday while trying to pass through the strait, shipping data showed traffic through the narrow waterway had come to a stop early on Sunday.

One China-owned tanker and an Indian-owned gas carrier were seen transiting eastbound early on Sunday morning. But they appear to have been turned back and no other vessels entered or left the Gulf after midnight GMT, according to MarineTraffic vessel-tracking data.

Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency reported that armed forces turned back two tankers attempting to transit the strait on Sunday after issuing warnings.

The vessels, sailing under the flags of Botswana and Angola, were forced to change course after what the report described as "unauthorised transit" through the strategic waterway.

Now in its eighth week, the war has created the most severe shock to global energy supplies in history, sending oil prices surging because of the de facto closure of the strait, which before the war carried one-fifth of the world's oil shipments.

A two-week ceasefire between the US and Iran is set to end on Wednesday unless it is renewed. A major sticking point in the peace talks has been Iran's stockpile of near-weapons-grade enriched uranium.

Trump said Friday that Iran had agreed to hand over its roughly 440 kilogrammes of enriched uranium.

On Sunday, President Masoud Pezeshkian questioned why Iran should give up its "legal right" to a nuclear programme.

"How come the US president declares that Iran should not use its nuclear rights but does not say why?" said a statement from the Iranian presidency.

"How in the world is he trying to deprive a nation of its legal rights?"

Pak PM speaks with Iran's prez

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Sunday that he spoke with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian about the conflict in the Gulf, reports Reuters. "I appreciated Iran's engagement, including its high-level delegation to Islamabad for the historic talks, and recent discussions with Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir in Tehran," Sharif said.

Iranians expect no post-war respite under military rule

DUBAI, REUTERS: Iranians striving to maintain a semblance of normal life after weeks of US and Israeli bombing and a deadly crackdown on protesters in January remain daunted by the future as damage from airstrikes and internet cuts take a toll.

With Iran and the US wrangling over a truce extension and an agreement to end the conflict, shops, restaurants and government offices have stayed open. On sunny spring mornings, city parks are busy with family picnics and young people playing sports while others gather at streetside cafes. But behind such peaceful scenes, Iran's economy is in tatters and people are fearful of a new government clampdown and angry about the destructive airstrikes. The difficulties that spurred mass unrest in January look likely to worsen.

Talks in Islamabad this month - the first direct negotiations between the United States and Iran in years - ended without an agreement. But with the current fragile ceasefire due to end on Wednesday, U.S. President Donald Trump said on Sunday that his envoys would head to Pakistan and were prepared to hold more talks.

"The war will end, but that's when our real problems with the system begin. I'm very afraid that if the regime reaches an agreement with the United States, it will increase pressure on ordinary people," a 37-year-old named Fariba, who took part in the January unrest, told Reuters by phone from Iran.

"People have not forgotten the regime's crimes in January, and the system has not forgotten that people do not want it. They are holding back now because they don't want to fight on a domestic front as well," she said. The bombing has killed thousands, according to official death tolls, including many at a school on the first day of the conflict.

Iran to resume international flights from today

Iran will resume international flights on Monday from Mashhad airport in the country's northeast, its civil aviation authority said, reports AFP. "Permission to operate international passenger flights at Mashhad Airport has been issued, starting tomorrow," state TV said, quoting the Civil Aviation Organisation.

The organisation later said travellers can now "purchase tickets for international routes to and from Mashhad Airport," according to the official IRNA news agency.

WORLD AT A GLANCE

A robot and its engineers take part in the second Beijing E-Town Half Marathon and Humanoid Half Marathon in Beijing on Sunday. AFP

V-P Radhakrishnan, Sri Lankan Prez discuss bilateral ties

▸ Vice President C P Radhakrishnan met Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake here on Sunday and held productive discussions on further deepening the multifaceted bilateral ties, housing projects and fishermen issues between the two South Asian neighbours, reports PTI from Colombo.

Radhakrishnan, who arrived here earlier in the day on a two-day visit, also discussed with Dissanayake the ongoing Indian project implementation in Sri Lanka with emphasis on the USD 450 million Cyclone Ditwah aid offered by India.

Accompanied by a 49-member delegation, the vice president was received at the Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo by Sports Minister Sunil Kumara Gamage and several other dignitaries.

Radhakrishnan's visit is the first ever by an Indian vice president to Sri Lanka, officials said.

Radhakrishnan laid emphasis on India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and developmental bilateral cooperation, officials said.

Poison in baby food jar in Austria

▸ Rat poison was found inside a jar of HiPP baby food, Austrian police said late on Saturday after the product was recalled from 1,500 SPAR supermarkets in the country over safety fears, reports Reuters from Geneva.

A statement from police in Burgenland said that a sample from one of the 190-gram jars of carrot with potato baby food reported by a customer in the Eisenstadt-Umgebung district had tested positive for rat poison.

HiPP had said on Saturday that it could not be ruled out that a dangerous substance was introduced into the product and that its HiPP Vegetable Carrot with Potato jars may have been tampered with.

Consuming the contents could be life-threatening, HiPP said.

The police statement said the affected jars had a sticker with a red circle on the bottom of the jar and a lid that had already been opened or damaged or missing a safety seal, or had an unusual smell.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz welcomes Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva at his arrival at the Herrenhausen Palace in Hannover, northern Germany, on Sunday, ahead of their visit to the Hannover industrial trade fair. AFP

1,000 homes gutted in Malaysia

▸ Thousands of people have been displaced after a fire destroyed around 1,000 homes in a coastal village in Malaysia's Sabah state on Borneo island on Sunday, the fire department said, reports Reuters from Kuala Lumpur.

Authorities were notified of the fire in Sandakan district at around 1.32 a.m. (1732 GMT), the district's fire and rescue chief Jimmy Lagung said. "Strong winds and the close proximity of the houses caused the fire to spread rapidly, while low tide conditions also made it difficult to obtain an open water source," he said.

Bulgaria's ex-prez leads in polls

▸ Bulgarian ex-president Rumen Radev's formation has come first in the eighth parliamentary elections in five years on Sunday, according to exit polls, but without securing a majority, reports AFP from Sofia.

Radev, who resigned as president in January, ran on a pledge to fight corruption after an anti-graft movement triggered a long political crisis.

The EU's poorest member has seen successive governments since 2021, when anti-graft rallies ended conservative administration of longtime leader Boyko Borissov.

Two Indian men shot dead in Italy while leaving gurdwara

ROME, PTI

Two Indian men have been shot dead in Italy's Covo in Bergamo province just as they were leaving a warehouse used as a place of worship during a gathering for Vaisakhi festival, local media reported on Sunday.

The attack occurred on Friday, a few minutes before midnight in the square in front of the Gurdwara Mata Sahib Kaur Ji in the industrial area of the town, according to La Sicilia newspaper.

The deceased were identified as Raginder Singh, 48, a resident of Covo, and Gurmit Singh, 48, from Agnadello.

The assailant allegedly approached the men, opened fire and then fled in a car, the paper reported.

According to initial findings, a sudden brawl that escalated into bloodshed has been ruled out, the report said.

Approximately ten shell casings were recovered from the scene as authorities investigate the hypothesis of a "coldly planned execution".

A witness was quoted as telling reporters that the shooter was "an Indian" who also frequented the gurdwara.

According to the same witness, the bullets also grazed a third person, it said.

An official celebration for Vaisakhi was planned for Saturday nearby with the participation of local institutions.

Eight kids killed in US mass shooting

Police term it an incident of domestic violence

WASHINGTON, AFP

Eight children were killed in a shooting spree early Sunday in the southern US state of Louisiana, in what police said appears to have been an incident of domestic violence.

The gunman, who was not immediately identified, was fatally shot by police after a car chase, officials said.

The incident took place in the city of Shreveport, in northwestern Louisiana.

"This is a rather extensive crime scene spanning between two residences," police Corporal Chris Bordelon told a press conference, adding that a third residence was also part of the scene being combed by investigators.

The victims ranged in age from one to 14, Bordelon said.

"Some of the children inside were his descendants," he added.

Two other people were struck by gunfire, but their conditions were not immediately known.

The suspect carjacked a vehicle and led police on a chase before officers opened fire and the assailant was killed.

"We do believe him to be the only individual that fired gunshots at these locations," Bordelon said, calling the incident a "domestic disturbance."

The United States, where firearms are readily available, is a frequent scene of gun violence, with thousands of people killed every year.

"It's a terrible morning in Shreveport and we all mourn with the victims," Mayor Tom Arceneaux said at the press conference.

'Multiple' hurt in midwestern campus shooting: Police

Police said "multiple" people were injured in a shooting at the University of Iowa early Sunday, after the midwestern US school issued an alert reporting gunshots in an area popular for nightlife, reports AFP.
The United States, where firearms are readily available, has a long history of gun violence that kills thousands of people every year. "The Iowa City Police Department is investigating a shooting that occurred Sunday," Iowa City officials said in a statement, adding that "no arrests have been made."

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN: U40109KA1999SGC025521)
No:CEE/Tr(Op)ZB/SEE(O)/AEE-4/F-368(1)/2026-27/468 Date:17.04.2026
TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through KPPP mode only)

KPTCL invites bid against the enquiry no: KPTCL/CEE/T(O)Z/BZ/PTK-01/26-27 for the work **"Augmentation of 2X20MVA, 66/11kV Power Transformers by 2X31.5MVA, 66/11kV Power transformers along with additional earth mat formation at 66/11kV Malur Industrial Area Sub-Station, in Malur Taluk, Kolar District on Partial Turnkey Basis including supply of all matching materials/equipments(Excluding Supply of Power Transformers, NIFPS, and 11kV Switchgears) and erection (including civil works) of all materials/equipments, testing and commissioning".** The Bids will be received through electronic tender mode only. The detailed notification regarding the subject enquiry in the e-tendering process can be obtained by logging into Karnataka Public Procurement (KPP) Portal website: **www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in on or after 21.04.2026.** Other details can be obtained from the office of the undersigned.

**Sd/- Chief Engineer (Electy), Transmission (Operations)
Zone, KPTCL, A.R. Circle, Bengaluru-560 009**

ಬೀದರ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯ BIDAR UNIVERSITY
ಜ್ಞಾನ ಕಾರಂಜ ಹಾಲಹಳ್ಳಿ (ಕೆ), ಬೀದರ–585414. ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ, ಭಾರತ.
OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR ADMIN SECTION
Email:registrarevaluationbidar@gmail.com
No. BUBIDAR/Exam/Tender/2026-27/ Date: 09.04.2026
TENDER NOTIFICATION
(E-Procurement two cover system)

The Bidar University, invites tender from eligible good's provider for the Supply of Computer Chairs, Computer Tables, Library Racks (Furniture) for the period of Three years as per Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act. The tenderers who have registered under E-governance Department of Karnataka may participate through e-tendering system. The approximate estimated cost of the procurement is of Rs.60Lacks.Tender documents may be downloaded from the E-Procurement Websitehttps://kppp.karnataka.gov.in. The eligible tenderers shall submit their proposal under e-procurement platform on or before the dates as scheduled in the e-portal. For any more information contact Registrar (Admin) Section, 9449391184.

Sd/-
Registrar (Admin)

Russian attacks kill at least 2 as Ukraine strikes drone factory

KYIV, AP: Russian strikes killed at least two people in Ukraine, officials said Sunday, as Ukraine's military struck a drone factory in southwestern Russia.

A 16-year-old boy died and four others were injured in a "massive" nighttime drone strike on Chernihiv in northern Ukraine, according to the head of the city's military administration.

Rescuers found the teenager's body as they cleared away rubble, Dmytro Bryzhynskyi reported on Telegram on Sunday morning. He said the drone strike also injured three women and one man. Several houses were set on fire, he added.

Israeli military publishes map of south Lebanon under its control

JERUSALEM, REUTERS

The Israeli military published for the first time a map of its new deployment line inside Lebanon on Sunday, bringing dozens of mostly abandoned Lebanese villages under its control, days after a ceasefire with Hezbollah took effect.

There was no immediate comment from Lebanese officials or from Iran-backed Hezbollah. Israel and Lebanon agreed on Thursday to a U.S.-backed ceasefire in fighting between Israel and Hezbollah. The deal, which followed the first direct talks in decades between Israel and Lebanon on April 14, is meant to enable broader U.S.-Iran negotiations but with Israeli forces maintaining positions deep inside southern Lebanon.

Stretching east to west, the deployment line on the map runs 5-10 km deep from the border into Lebanese territory, where Israel has said that it plans to create a so-called buffer zone. Israeli forces have destroyed Lebanese villages in the area, saying their aim is to protect northern Israeli towns from Hezbollah attacks. It has created buffer zones in Syria and in Gaza, where it controls more than half the enclave.

"Five divisions, alongside Israeli Navy forces, are operating simultaneously south of the forward defence line in southern Lebanon in order to dismantle Hezbollah terror infrastructure sites and to prevent direct threats to communities in northern Israel," the military said in a statement accompanying the map.

Asked whether people who fled the Israeli strikes would be allowed to return to their homes, the Israeli military declined to comment.

'Full force attack'

-Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said Sunday that the military had been instructed to use "full force" in Lebanon -- even during the ongoing ceasefire -- should Israeli troops face any threat. "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and I have instructed the IDF to act with full force, both on the ground and from the air, including during the ceasefire, in order to protect our soldiers in Lebanon from any threat," Katz said.

North Korea fires multiple ballistic missiles into sea: Seoul

SEOUL, AFP: North Korea test-fired multiple short-range ballistic missiles on Sunday, South Korea's military said, the latest in a recent flurry of launches by the nuclear-armed state.

The Sunday launches add to a series of weapons tests Pyongyang has carried out in recent weeks, including ballistic missiles, anti-warship cruise missiles and cluster munitions.

"Our military detected several short-range ballistic missiles fired into the East Sea from the Sinpo area of North Korea at around 6:10 am (2110 GMT)," South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said, referring to a body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

"The missiles flew approximately 140 kilometres (87 miles), and South Korean and US intelligence authorities are conducting a detailed analysis of their exact specifications," it added.

VIRTUAL WORLD

China seeks to rein in risks from AI 'digital humans'

BEIJING, AFP

After her father died from cancer, Zhang Xinyu had an artificial intelligence avatar made that looks and sounds just like him, part of a growing "digital human" industry that China is moving to govern more tightly.

Videos featuring AI digital humans are ubiquitous on Chinese social media, with their uncanny features and smooth, dexterous motions often used to tout products.

The nation's cyberspace regulator issued draft rules this month on how these avatars are developed and deployed -- seeking to stop them harming children, threatening social stability or being created to resemble someone without their consent.

Zhang, 47, approached the company Super Brain two years ago, feeling depressed and lonely following her bereavement.

She can now converse online with her father's avatar, something that made her feel "fully recharged in an instant and filled with motivation once again", she told AFP.

Some friends worried Zhang would become too immersed in the virtual world and "never be able to move on", calling it a form of "false comfort", she added.

"But even if the comfort itself is simulated, the love behind it is real," said Zhang, who is based in Liaoning province.

State news agency Xinhua reported last year that the country's digital human industry was worth around 4.1 billion yuan ($600 million) in 2024, having grown a huge 85 percent year-on-year.

Chinese governance of new digital technologies has always followed the logic of "develop first, then regulate, and perfect in the process", said Marina Zhang, from the University of Technology Sydney.

Enrica wins main event

DELHI RESULTS

SM Abbas-trained Enrica, ridden by R Parvesh, won the North India Fillies Trial Stakes, the main event of the races on Sunday.

1. The Navratna Plate - 1600M: Ashwa Gajraj (Sameer Qureshi) 1, Cletus (MB Qureshi) 2, Black Rainstorm (Faizan Khan) 3, Sir Mor (Dhanu Singh) 4. WB: 4, 3-3/4, 1-1/4. T: 1:40.16. TB: S Nawab; Fav: Cletus.

2. The Champion's Call Plate - 1000M: Yakutsk (Aasif Khan) 1, Salam Bhai (K Sunny Kumar) 2, Big Bang (Shivam) 3, Master Tornado (Lave Kumar) 4. WB: 3/4, 4-3/4, 2-1/2. T: 59.82. TB: VS Parmer; Fav: Master Tornado.

3. The Winning Streak Plate - 1000M: Bread N Butter (Vishal) 1, Jet Thunder (K Sunny Kumar) 2, Nice Currency (Sameer Qureshi) 3, Shera (Varun) 4. WB: 1-1/4, Nk, 1-1/2. T: 1:0.54.TB: Irfan Ali; Fav: Bread N Butter.

4. The North India Fillies Trial Stakes - 1400M: Enrica (R Parvesh) 1, Stavya (Varun) 2, Reback (Vivek G) 3, Ashwa Reckong Peo (K Nazil) 4. WB: 13, 3-1/4, Nk. T: 1:27.72. TB: SM Abbas; Fav: Ashwa Reckong Peo.

5. The Lucky Stride Plate - 1100M: Ashwa Kangto (K Nazil) 1, Ashwa Kanchenjunga (Sabdar Shah Khadri) 2, Big Decision (Vishal) 3, Robust (Dhanu Singh) 4. WB: 2-1/4, 1/2, Shd. T: 1:4.98. TB: S Nawab; Fav: Big Decision.

6. The Destiny Run Plate - 1100M: Lady Hitman (Varun) 1, First Class (Dhanu Singh) 2, Chieftain (K Nazil) 3, Nairobi (Shivam) 4. WB: 1/2, Nk, Nk. T: 1:6.73. TB: K Ali Khan; Fav: First Class.

Bengaluru dividends

I race: Rs 70 (w); 28, 11p; Shp: Rs 25; Thp: Rs 20; Fc: Rs 186; Q: Rs 56; Tri: Rs 309 & 139; Exp: Rs 511 & 173.

II race: Rs 29 (w); 10, 19p; Shp: Rs 32; Thp: Rs 67; Fc: Rs 187; Q: Rs 182; Tri: Rs 901 & 773; Exp: Rs 3714 & 994.

III race: Rs 17 (w); 10, 22, 47 p; Shp: Rs 71; Thp: Rs 81; Fc: Rs 141; Q: Rs 73; Tri: Rs 3861 & 1489; Exp: Rs 1780 & 693.

IV race: Rs 44 (w); 21, 39 p; Shp: Rs 66; Thp: Rs 39; Fc: Rs 748; Q: Rs 294; Tri: Rs 1052 & 191; Exp: Rs 2084 & 1919.

V race: Rs 35 (w); 12, 35, 15 p; Shp: Rs 116; Thp: Rs 57; Fc: Rs 1215; Q: Rs 666; Tri: Rs 2747 & 1766; Exp: Rs 6634 & 3791.

VI race: Rs 169 (w); 40, 11, 20 p; Shp: Rs 25; Thp: Rs 61; Fc: Rs 810; Q: Rs 240; Tri: Rs 2688 & 1152; Exp: Rs 3317 & 1243.

Jackpot: Rs 1, 12,876 & 4398.

Treble: Rs 2211.

Aditi moves up the ladder

LOS ANGELES, PTI: India's Aditi Ashok fought back with three birdies on the back nine to move up to tied-36th place with a third-round card of 3-under 69 at the JM Eagle Los Angeles Championship here.

Aditi birdied the sixth but gave it back on the par-5 seventh. On the back nine, she birdied 11th and added two more gains on the 16th and the 18th for a 69, after 70-72 on the first two days.

FOOTBALL EURO ROUND-UP

City dent Arsenal's title dreams

Cherki, Haaland strike in 2-1 win; United edge Chelsea

MANCHESTER, AFP

Manchester City are breathing down Arsenal's necks after Erling Haaland's strike beat the Gunners 2-1 on Sunday to land a potentially decisive blow in the Premier League title race.

Pep Guardiola's men close to within three points of the leaders and have a game in hand with momentum firmly in their favour as Arsenal's quest for a first league title in 22 years unravels.

Defeat to City in the League Cup final last month has sparked a run of one win in six games in all competitions for Mikel Arteta's men, including four consecutive defeats in domestic competitions.

Victory over relegation-bound Burnley on Wednesday will take City top for the first time this year.

After finishing second for the past three seasons, Arsenal are at risk of seeing another huge chance to end their long wait to be champions of England slip away.

But they will also rue their luck after twice hitting the post, either side of Haaland's winner in the second half.

After Rayan Cherki's stunning solo effort opened the scoring, City gifted the visitors a route back into the game when Kai Havertz charged down GIanluigi Donnarumma's attempted clearance to equalise.

But the difference in quality up front proved the difference.

Haaland pounced to sweep in his 34th goal of the season 25 minutes from time before Havertz headed over a glorious chance deep into stoppage time.

Liverpool win

Virgil van Dijk scored a last-gasp winner against Everton on Sunday in London as Liverpool strengthened their push for a Champions League spot next season.

On a pivotal day in the English top division, fourth-placed Aston Villa squandered a two-goal lead against Sunderland but scored in stoppage time to win 4-3.

At the other end of the table, Morgan Gibbs-White netted a hat-trick as struggling Nottingham Forest came from behind against Burnley to win 4-1 and heap the pressure on Spurs.

Meanwhile, Matheus Cunha fired Manchester United towards the Champions League with a 1-0 win at Chelsea on Saturday.

Results (on Sunday): Manchester City: 2 (Cherki 16th, Haaland 65th) bt Arsenal: 1 (Havertz 18th); Everton: 1 (Beto 54th) lt to Liverpool: 2 (Salah 29th, van Dijk 90th+10); Nottingham Forest: 4 (Gibbs-White 62nd, 69th, 77th, Jesus 90th+8) bt Burnley: 1 (Flemming 45th+2); Aston Villa: 4 (Watkins 2nd, 36th, Rogers 46th, Abraham 90th+3) bt Sunderland: 3 (Rigg 9th, Hume 86th, Isidor 87th).
On Saturday: Chelsea: 0 lt to Manchester United: 1 (Cunha 43rd); Tottenham: 2 (Porro 39th, Simons 77th) drew with Brighton: 2 (Mitoma 45+3rd, Rutter 90+5th).

Premier League points table (TOP 5)

Club	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
Arsenal	33	21	7	5	63	26	37	70
Man City	32	20	7	5	65	29	36	67
Man United	33	16	10	7	58	45	13	58
Aston Villa	33	17	7	9	47	41	6	58
Liverpool	33	16	7	10	54	43	11	55

Erling Haaland (right) scored Manchester City's second goal during their crucial 2-1 victory over Arsenal at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester on Sunday. AFP

Sociedad stun Atletico for Copa glory

SEVILLE (SPAIN), AFP

Real Sociedad edged Atletico Madrid 4-3 on penalties to win the Copa del Rey for a fourth time in the club's history after a 2-2 draw in a gripping final on Saturday in Seville.

After Alexander Sorloth and Julian Alvarez missed from the spot for Diego Simeone's Atletico, Pablo Marin smashed home his kick to claim victory for the Basque side.

Ander Barrenetxea had headed Real Sociedad ahead after just 14 seconds, with Ademola Lookman levelling for Atletico.

Mikel Oyarzabal put the Basque side ahead from the penalty spot before the break but Alvarez rescued Atletico and forced extra time and ultimately penalties with a superb strike.

La Real's season seemed set to be one of struggle until American coach Pellegrino Matarazzo was appointed in December, and he resuscitated their campaign.

"It's a moment to enjoy, to dream and to believe... the kid who dreamed of this... has done it," said Real Sociedad goalkeeper Unai Marrero, who saved two penalties.

Champions League semi-finalists Atletico, 10-time winners of the cup, were left to lick their wounds and rue mistakes.

"We did everything we could, we had to row against the current from the start," said Atletico captain Koke. "We had some chances before the end of the 90 minutes that if we had scored would have changed the story. We have to congratulate La Real, that's life. It hurts but we have to continue."

At La Cartuja stadium it was a battle between two teams that often attack fast and direct, and Real Sociedad certainly did that, netting the quickest ever goal scored in a Copa del Rey final.

Goncalo Guedes scampered away down the left on to a long ball, crossing for Barrenetxea to head beyond Juan Musso before the Rojiblancos had even touched the ball.

Simeone's side, who last won the competition back in 2013 near the start of his 14-year reign, wrestled their way back level through Lookman.

Result: Atletico Madrid: 2 (Lookman 19th, Alvarez 83rd) lt to Real Sociedad: 2 (Barrenetxea 1st, Oyarzabal 45+1st) in penalty shootout 3-4.

Real Sociedad's Mikel Oyerzabal lifts the Copa Del Rey as his team-mates celerate at Cartuja Stadium in Seville, Spain on Saturday night. AFP

IN BRIEF

State-ranking in KBA from Apr 22

▸ The Vivek Karan Memorial Karnataka State Junior & Senior ranking badminton tournament will be held at the Karnataka Badminton Association (KBA) with the main draw beginning on April 22 and the finals scheduled on April 25, reports DHNS.

Abhinav Garg and Naren S Iyer (men's); Ashwaty Varghese and Lakshya Rajesh (women's); Hardik Divyansh and Harshad Shadish (under-19 boys); Nidhi Atmaram and Hithaishree L Rajaiah (U-19 girls) are the top-two seeds in their respective categories.

Suraj storms into men's final

▸ India's Suraj Kumar Chand outplayed Hong Kong's Wailok To to enter the men's final of the HCL Squash PSA Challenger Tour on Sunday, reports PTI from Chennai.

Second seed Chand won 11-8, 11-7, 11-6 in the men's semifinals played at the Indian Squash Academy here.

Chand, ranked 134th in the world, will meet South Korean eighth seed Jeongmin Ryu in the final.

Results (semis, prefix denotes seedings):
Men: 8-Jeongmin Ryu (Kor) bt 4-Andes Ling (HK) 11-13, 11-9, 11-3, 13-11; 2-Suraj Kumar Chand (Ind) bt Wailok To (HK) 11-8, 11-7, 11-6.
Women: 2-Harleein Tan (Mas) bt Salma Othman (Egy) 11-4, 11-9, 10-12, 11-7; 7-Rouqaia Othman (Egy) bt Sehveetrraa Kumar (Mas) 7-11, 11-7, 11-9, 7-11, 11-6.

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

IPL: Gujarat Titans vs Mumbai Indians **(7:30 pm)**. **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar**.

FOOTBALL

EPL: Crystal Palace vs West Ham **(12:30 am, Tuesday)**. **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network**.

ISL: Punjab FC vs Inter Kashi **(7:30 pm)**. **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Ten 2, FanCode**.

Renting cars to large-format entertainment hubs...

Torq03 to bring world-class large-format entertainment to Bengaluru with international collaborations

Announcing Torq03's collaboration with the Leading Karting Alliance and CSML.

Mark Lamy, Consul General of France in Bengaluru, tries the Moto GP Simulator at Torq03 Ezone.

Bertrand Pignolet, Chairman, Sodikart and the Leading Karting Alliance Group (left) with Sreeharsha S D, Director, Torq03.

In a city defined by ambition, Sreeharsha S D's journey stands out as a compelling example of self-made growth. A native of Chikkamagaluru, he moved to Bengaluru at a young age and began his career at a call centre in 2004. What followed was an unconventional path driven by instinct and opportunity.

Starting off with a single car, Sreeharsha began renting it out for airport transfers - a simple idea that laid the foundation for Athena Cars & Tours. Today, the company operates a fleet of over 3,000 premium vehicles, including electric and CNG, serving major corporate clients across IT, banking, pharma and BPO sectors. With operations expanding into Hyderabad and Chennai, Athena continues to scale towards a more sustainable future.

Alongside this, his passion for motorsports led to the creation of Torq03 in 2008 - initially a go-karting track within E-Zone Club at Marathahalli. Over the years, it evolved into a large-format entertainment hub integrating bowling, laser tag, arcade gaming and F&B.

Following a phase of reinvestment and expansion, Torq03 strengthened its offerings and introduced premium experiences such as the official MotoGP simulator. In 2024, the company further elevated its positioning with the introduction of advanced electric karts from Sodikart (France) and a multi-level track design, optimising space in a dense urban environment.

Spread across 2.50 acres approximately, Torq03 stands as one of Bengaluru's prominent entertainment destinations today.

Marking significant milestones, the company recently entered into international partnerships with Sodikart (France) and 360 Karting (Slovenia), in collaboration with CSML Group.

The announcement, made in the presence of the Consul General of France in Bengaluru, underscores the growing global interest in India's entertainment infrastructure.

Building on this momentum, Torq03 has announced plans for a new indoor karting facility at Embassy Manyata Business Park, expected to feature advanced track design, next-generation safety systems and globally-benchmarked technology. From a single vehicle to global collaborations, Sreeharsha's journey reflects the evolution of both an entrepreneur and a city's appetite for world-class entertainment.

(Left to right) Rohit Mathur, Director, CSML India; Bertrand Pignolet, Chairman, Sodikart and the Leading Karting Alliance Group; Sreeharsha S D, Director, Torq03; and Mark Lamy, Consul General of France in Bengaluru.

The A-team.

Curated by DH Brandspot

> It is lovely when you have a bunch of young bowlers who are coming up with their own plans and executing the team plans as well. As a captain, it makes my job easier to set fields.
>
> **ISHAN KISHAN, SRH CAPTAIN**

10 TEAMS 13 VENUES 58 DAYS 74 MATCHES

Hussey says Mhatre injury ‘looks pretty bad’

HYDERABAD, PTI: Chennai Super Kings have been dealt a major blow with young batter Ayush Mhatre sustaining a hamstring tear which “looks pretty bad” during their IPL match against Sunrisers Hyderabad here.

The 18-year-old, who came in as an impact substitute, appeared in visible discomfort and clutched his hamstring while attempting a run, requiring on-field treatment during CSK’s 10-run loss to SRH here on Saturday.

“Obviously a hamstring tear. I don’t know how bad it is. I’m sure we’ll scan him probably tomorrow or the next day,” batting coach Mike Hussey said at the post-match press conference.

The Australian added that Mhatre will undergo scans to assess the extent of the injury, with the recovery timeline remaining uncertain.

Pathirana boost for struggling KKR

KOLKATA, PTI: Sri Lankan pacer Matheesha Pathirana has finally arrived in the city to join Kolkata Knight Riders, giving a much-needed boost to the side that is currently languishing at the bottom of the IPL table.

Having recovered from a calf strain sustained in the T20 World Cup, Pathirana cleared the mandatory fitness test by Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) before receiving a no-objection certificate.

KKR huff & puff to first win

Rinku, Varun, Narine star as Kolkata beat Rajasthan Royals by four-wkts

KOLKATA, PTI

Vice-captain Rinku Singh lived up to expectations with a composed unbeaten 53 as Kolkata Knight Riders survived anxious moments to script their first win of IPL 2026 with a four-wicket victory over Rajasthan Royals, here on Sunday.

Courtesy Rinku and Anukul Roy, the target was achieved with two balls to spare and the win took them to ninth spot in the 10-team table.

Wily Varun Chakravarthy (3/14) returned to his best, showing perfect chemistry with veteran Sunil Narine (2/26) as KKR rediscovered their spin magic at Eden Gardens to restrict RR to an under-par 155/9. Rookie pacer Kartik Tyagi (3/22) also shone at the death with important wickets.

The bowlers had done half the job for KKR in pursuit of their maiden victory after six matches, and it was up to the batters to finish the task.

But what followed was another familiar batting horror from a line-up that has struggled for consistency this season.

Reeling at 85/6 in 13.3 overs, KKR needed 69 runs from the last six overs, with RR’s bowlers tightening the screws and Rinku alongside Anukul Roy appearing to be the last recognised pair.

Then came a moment of fortune as Rinku was dropped on eight by Nandre Burger -- a sitter that proved to be the turning point.

The KKR vice-captain made full use of the reprieve to change gears, while Roy played the perfect supporting role as the duo stitched a match-winning 76-run seventh-wicket stand off just 37 balls to seal KKR’s first win of the season.

The much-awaited victory came after a six-match winless run, taking KKR to three points at the halfway stage. For RR, it was a second successive defeat, with their middle-order concerns persisting, especially with skipper Riyan Parag enduring a lean run.

The win will bring much-needed relief for KKR, who had lost from winning positions in recent games. It took them 22 days to finally break the jinx.

On a day when skipper Ajinkya Rahane failed again, registering a second successive duck, it was Rinku who led from the front with 53 not out off 34 balls (5x4, 2x6). Roy complemented him well with 29 not out off 16 balls (1x4, 2x6).

Rinku shifted momentum with a slog-sweep six off Ravi Bishnoi in the 16th over that yielded 19 runs.

Rinku Singh (left) scored a 34-ball 54 while Player of the Match Varun Chakravarthy picked up 3/14 to help Kolkata Knight Riders register a four-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals. PTI

SCORE BOARD

RAJASTHAN ROYALS: Yashasvi Jaiswal c Rahane b Narine 39, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi c Ramandeep b Chakaravarthy 46, Dhruv Jurel st Seifert b Chakaravarthy 5, Riyan Parag b Chakaravarthy 12, Shimron Hetmyer c Raghuvanshi b Tyagi 15, Donovan Ferreira c & b Narine 7, Ravindra Jadeja c Green b Tyagi 9, Jofra Archer (run out) 8, Ravi Bishnoi c Seifert b Tyagi 0, Brijesh Sharma (not out) 1. Extras (B-1, LB-2, W-10) 13. **TOTAL (for 9 wkts, 20 overs) 155.**

Fall of wickets: 1-81, 2-97, 3-99, 4-117, 5-124, 6-144, 7-146, 8-146, 9-155.

Bowling: Vaibhav Arora 4-0-37-0, Kartik Tyagi 4-0-22-3, Cameron Green 2-0-27-0, Sunil Narine 4-0-26-2, Varun Chakaravarthy 4-0-14-3, Ramandeep Singh 2-0-26-0.

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS: Tim Seifert b Archer 0, Ajinkya Rahane c Jurel b Burger 0, Angkrish Raghuvanshi lbw b Jadeja 10, Cameron Green st Jurel b Bishnoi 27, Powell c Ferreira b Jadeja 23, Rinku Singh (not out) 53, Ramandeep Singh b Yash 10, Anukul Roy (not out) 29. Extras: (LB-1, W-8) 9. **TOTAL (for 6 wkts, 19.4 overs) 161.**

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-5, 3-37, 4-52, 5-70, 6-85.

Bowling: Jofra Archer 4-0-35-1, Nandre Burger 2-0-20-1, Ravi Bishnoi 4-0-41-1, Yash Raj Punja 4-0-25-1, Ravindra Jadeja 3-0-8-2, Riyan Parag 1-0-10-0, Brijesh Sharma 1.4-0-21-0.

Result: KKR won by 4 wkts.
PoM: Varun Chakravarthy.

Struggling MI face confident GT

AHMEDABAD, PTI

An embattled Mumbai Indians side will be desperate to arrest its slide when it takes on a confident Gujarat Titans outfit, which is eager to extend its winning run, in the Indian Premier League here on Monday.

The two teams enter the fixture having endured contrasting fortunes in recent weeks. The Titans, after opening their campaign with back-to-back defeats, have rediscovered their rhythm with three successive wins which have placed them sixth on the table.

Mumbai, in stark contrast, began with a rare opening-game victory but have since unravelled, suffering four defeats on the bounce and the margin of their losses have been huge, leaving them languishing at ninth.

For the five-time champions, it has been a season where little has clicked. Their campaign has been undermined by a combination of timid powerplay returns, inconsistent middle-order output, and a bowling attack that has lacked penetration.

Much of the spotlight has been on Suryakumar Yadav and Tilak Varma **(in pic)**, the fulcrum of MI’s middle order.

While Suryakumar has shown flashes of brilliance, including a half-century, he has struggled for consistency. Tilak, meanwhile, has been woefully out of form, managing just 43 runs in five innings.

Skipper Hardik Pandya hasn’t fared much better either, with 81 runs from four games, further compounding Mumbai’s batting woes.

The problems, however, run deeper than just batting. Mumbai’s inability to seize control in the powerplay has left them chasing games too often.

The redoubtable Jasprit Bumrah’s wicket-less run is one of MI’s major concerns. The premier fast bowler has been economical and disciplined but remains wicket-less, with opposition batters content to play him out without taking undue risks.

Support from the rest of the attack has been minimal. Shardul Thakur and Deepak Chahar have failed to make decisive breakthroughs as has Pandya.

POINTS TABLE

Team	Played	Won	Lost	NR	Pts	NRR
Punjab Kings	6	5	0	1	11	1.420
Royal Challengers	6	4	2	0	8	1.171
Rajasthan Royals	6	4	2	0	8	0.599
Sunrisers Hyderabad	6	3	3	0	6	0.566
Delhi Capitals	5	3	2	0	6	0.310
Gujarat Titans	5	3	2	0	6	0.018
Chennai Super Kings	6	2	4	0	4	-0.780
Lucknow Super Giants	6	2	4	0	4	-1.173
Kolkata Knight Riders	7	1	5	1	3	-0.879
Mumbai Indians	5	1	4	0	2	-1.076

Punjab’s juggernaut continues

Fiery fifties from Arya, Connolly hand PBKS 54-run win vs Super Giants

MULLANPUR, PTI

Priyansh Arya, one of the country’s most talked about T20 batting talent alongside Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, smashed his way to a magnificent 93 as Punjab Kings clinically demolished Lucknow Super Kings by 54 runs in an IPL match here on Sunday.

The 24-year-old Delhi man, whose knock came off just 37 balls, joined hands with Cooper Connolly, the most talked about next-gen batting star in Australia, who also oozed class in his 45-ball-87 as Punjab Kings posted an insurmountable 254 for 7 in 20 overs.

The duo added an astounding 182 runs off just 80 balls with 16 sixes (9 from Priyansh and 7 from Connolly) and 12 fours shared between them.

In reply, Lucknow Super Giants despite a reasonably good Powerplay that fetched 61 runs were never in contention as they finished on 200 for five.

The likes of skipper Rishabh Pant (43 off 23 balls) and Mitchell Marsh (40 off 28 balls) tried but their intent and execution paled in comparison to the six-hitting exhibition of Priyansh and Connolly.

Vyshak Vijaykumar (1/30 in 4 overs) was brilliant with his pace-on and pace-off variations that stopped both Marsh and Pant in their tracks.

Once both were gone, wrapping up the match was a mere formality for Shreyas Iyer’s men, itching to go one better than their previous runners-up finish in 2025.

Priyansh Arya scored a brilliant 37-ball 93 to help Punjab Kings beat Lucknow Super Giants by 54 runs on Sunday. PTI

SCORE BOARD

PUNJAB KINGS: Priyansh Arya c Marsh b Siddharth 93, Prabhsimran Singh c Marsh b Shami 0, Cooper Connolly c Siddharth b Prince 87, Shreyas Iyer c Shami b Mohsin 5, Marcus Stoinis (run out) 29, Nehal Wadhera c Pooran b Siddharth 13, Shashank Singh c Markram b Prince 17, Marco Jansen (not out) 1. Extras (LB-3, W-6) 9. **TOTAL (for 7 wkts, 20 overs) 254.**

Fall of wickets: 3-1, 185-2, 187-3, 193-4, 208-5, 252-6, 254-7.

Bowling: Mohammed Shami 4-0-56-1, Mohsin Khan 4-0-43-1, Prince Yadav 4-0-25-2, Ayush Badoni 1-0-14-0, Avesh Khan 3-0-46-0, Manimaran Siddharth 3-0-35-2, Aiden Markram 1-0-32-0.

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS: Mitchell Marsh c Bartlett b Chahal 40, Ayush Badoni c Bartlett b Vyshak 35, Rishabh Pant c Prabhsimran b Arshdeep 43, Nicholas Pooran c Iyer b Jansen 9, Aiden Markram c Stoinis b Jansen 42, Mukul Choudhary (not out) 21, Himmat Singh (not out) 1. Extras (W-6, LB-2, NB-1) 9. **TOTAL (for 5 wkts, 20 overs) 200.**

Fall of wickets: 61-1, 109-2, 128-3, 139-4, 199-5.

Bowling: Arshdeep Singh 4-0-41-1, Xavier Bartlett 4-0-54-0, Marco Jansen 4-0-37-2, Vijaykumar Vyshak 4-0-30-1, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-36-1.

Result: PBKS win by 54 runs.
PoM: Priyansh Arya

UAE to Rajasthan via Karnataka

VIGNESH BHARADWAJ
BENGALURU, DHNS

Former Karnataka cricketer and Six Cricket Academy director K Jeshwant had flown to Abu Dhabi for a two-week coaching camp back in 2023. And that’s where a tall, gangly leg-spinner, Yash Raj Punja, who was playing “recreational cricket”, caught his eye.

However, his introduction to the professional side of things was not as straightforward as his parents were not very keen. And understandably so, as Yash’s brother Yodhin Punja, who captained U-19 UAE, had to quit due to an injury.

He ended up with cricket eventually, largely due the persistence of Jeshwant, who persuaded his parents to give Yash “a chance.” Another deciding factor that convinced the family was former England captain Alastair Cook’s “X-factor” comment after watching the 19-year-old bowl.

That led to Yash coming to Bengaluru and training at the Six Academy under Jeshwant in the summers.

Yash Raj Punja. X

Fast forward, at the IPL mini-auction last December, Yash landed Rs 30 lakh contract with the Royals. Four months on, his life took a sharp turn on a slow Eden Gardens wicket when he was summoned as Royals’ Impact Substitute against Kolkata Knight Riders.

However, it was a tough initiation, bowling his first over in the final over off the powerplay. He was smashed for 12 runs, including a six and a four. In his next, he conceded only seven. It got only better as he gave away just six runs in his next 12 balls and also picked up the wicket of Ramandeep Singh for his maiden IPL wicket.

A proud Jeshwant even saw shades of the great Anil Kumble in him.

“There were a lot of positives in Yash,” Jeshwant told *DH*. “I saw a little bit of Kumble in him. He’s taller than Kumble obviously but it was the bounce that I thought was the deciding factor.”

As luck would have it, the Rajasthan Royals were also setting up training camps at Six Academy and were in need of a few net bowlers. Taking Jeshwanth’s advice, Yash attended those practice sessions.

It might have been just net bowling but Yash grabbed the opportunity with both hands and managed to impress the Royals’ think tank. Ever since, he has received invitations for all RR camps and has spent two years as a net bowler.

However, it has not been all franchise cricket. While he tried to breakthrough the Karnataka setup, domicile was an issue.

In a happy coincidence, the Karnataka State Cricket Association, which had a three-year playing period in the local leagues to be eligible to play for a State side, reduced it to two in 2025 and Yash cleared the criterion.

Yash was picked for the State under-23 camp and also landed a contract with Hubli Tigers last season.

The 6’5” tall spinner finished as the second-highest wicket-taker in the Maharaja KSCA T20 Trophy, the premier domestic 20-over tournament in the State.

Playing in only his first season, he picked 23 wickets at 12.48 runs apiece.

“He generates good bounce with his stock ball. We started working around that. We also worked on his slower ball and I was particularly impressed with how he used it today.

“Very hardworking and intelligent kid. Good things are there. We are also working on his batting and fielding,” Jeshwant offered.

Fils bags Barcelona title; Rybakina wears Stuttgart crown

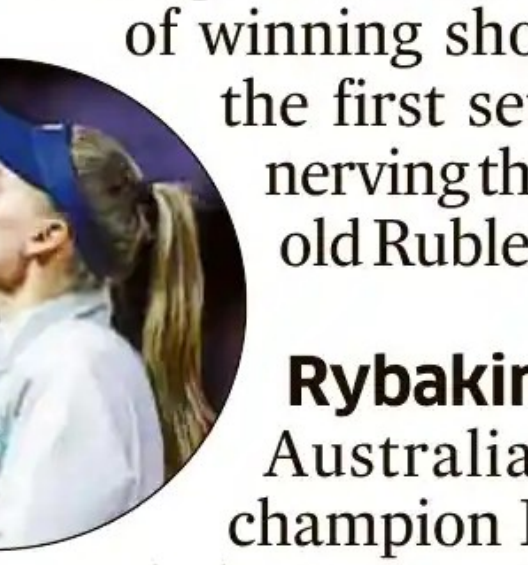
BARCELONA, AFP: Up-and-coming Frenchman Arthur Fils beat Russian Andrey Rublev 6-2, 7-6 (7/2) to lift the Barcelona clay-court title on Sunday with Roland Garros just a month away.

The 21-year-old Fils returned from an eight-month injury absence in February and has been in strong form, finishing as runner-up to Carlos Alcaraz in Doha, before breezing to a fourth trophy of his career on Sunday.

“These eight months have been hard,” he said. “And now here I am winning a tournament again.”

The result will make him France’s top-ranked male player after showing poise and maturity to negotiate his way to this ATP 500 title, including fighting from a set down to beat Spanish hope Rafael Jodar in the semi-final.

On Sunday, he went 2-0 down in the first set before finding his serve and a flurry of winning shots to win the first set 6-2, unnerving the 28-year-old Rublev.



Rybakina wins

Australian Open champion Elena Rybakina **(in pic)** picked up her second title of the year as she outclassed Karolina Muchova 7-5, 6-1 to win the WTA Stuttgart tournament on Sunday.

Top seed Rybakina, 26, never looked back in the second set rushing to a 5-0 lead as Muchova struggled with her serve, sealing victory and the 13th title of her career after 1hr 18 min.

Kadur triumphs in South India Rally

BENGALURU, DHNS

Bengaluru ace Karna Kadur, along with co-driver Kumar Ramaswamy (Coimbatore) of Arka Motorsports, survived a turbo failure and surged to victory in the 49th South India Rally, organised by the Madras Motor Sports Club, at the Madras International Circuit, on Sunday even as his arch-rival Gaurav Gill retired with mechanical problem.

The 37-year-old Kadur’s pace through the weekend was scorching as he blitzed the combined FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship powered by Vamcy Merla and the FMSCI Indian National Rally Championship grids while yet again showcasing his undoubted talent.

Finishing in second spot in the APRC was Hyderabad’s Jeet Jhabkah and co-driver Musa Sherif from Kasargod, while the Spanish husband-wife team of Edgar Vigo Lopez and Fatima Ameneiro Teijeiro completed the podium.

Karna Kadur (left) and co-driver Kumar Ramaswamy celebrate their victory in the 49th South India Rally in Chennai on Sunday.

Provisional classification: Asia-Pacific Rally Championship: Karna Kadur/ Kumar Ramaswamy (Arka Motorsports) (01hr, 59mins, 55.5secs) 1; Jeet Jabhakh/ Musa Sherif (pvt.) (02:04:58.0) 2; Edgar Vigo Lopez/ Fatima Ameneiro Teijeiro (Spain) (02:05:47.8) 3.

Indian National Rally Championship: INRC Overall: Karna Kadur / Kumar Ramaswamy (Arka Motorsports) (01:59:55.5) 1; Ritesh Guttedar / Suraj M (AART Motorsports) (02:04:27.4) 2; Arvind Dheerendra/ Shahid Salman (Duran Racing) (02:04:29.2) 3.

INRC 2: Ritesh Guttedar/ Suraj M (AART Motorsports) (02:04:27.4) 1; Jeet Jabhakh / Musa Sherif (pvt.) (02:04:58.0) 2; Arjun Y Mavaji / Jeevarathinam J (Chettinad Sporting) (02:07:49.8) 3.

INRC 3: Arvind Dheerendra / Shahid Salman (Duran Racing) (02:04:29.2) 1; Chandan Manchegowda / Suraj Keshav Prasad (Arka Motorsports) (02:06:02.4) 2; Tarushi Vikram / Athreya Kousgi (Chettinad Sporting) (02:06:46.1) 3.

INRC 3T: Vishakh Balachandran / Chiranth Jain (Duran Racing) (02:05:43.6) 1; Anushriya Gulati / Karan Aukta (Arka Motorsports) (02:06:38.8) 2; Adith KC / Avinash CA (Arka Motorsports) (02:11:01.9) 3.

Ladies: Tarushi Vikram / Athreya Kousgi (Chettinad Sporting) (02:06:46.1) 1; Athira Murali / Arun Chakkalakkal (Duran Racing) (02:15:30.0) 2; Sonakshi Paranthaman / Dheeraj Salimath (Chettinad Sporting) (02:20:56.8) 3.

Junior INRC: Tarushi Vikram / Athreya Kousgi (Chettinad Sporting) (02:06:46.1) 1; Sonakshi Paranthaman/ Dheeraj Salimath (Chettinad Sporting) (02:20:56.8) 2; Hoshmand Elavia / Venu Ramesh Kumar (Pvt.) (02:50:41.3) 3.

Masters Cup: Pradeep Ravi / Thimmu Uddapanda (Arka Motorsports) (02:07:15.1) 1; Balakrishna Jayasimha / Arjun Dheerendra (Pvt.) (02:18:13.6) 2.

Classic Cup: 1. Sreejesh MP/ Naushad KM (Pvt.) (02:38:28.7).

Chief selector Agarkar’s contract renewed till next year

NEW DELHI, PTI: Ajit Agarkar **(in pic)** will continue as chairman of the senior selection committee after the BCCI decided to renew his contract for one more year, keeping an eye on the 2027 ODI World Cup.

Under Agarkar’s chairmanship, the selected Indian teams between October 2023 to March 2026 reached four ICC tournament finals, winning three of them -- two T20 World Cups and one ICC Champions Trophy -- and it was a foregone conclusion that his contract would be renewed for fourth year.

“Agarkar didn’t seek extension. A selector can continue up to four years in either junior or senior selection committee and five years cumulatively across both committees. Hence Ajit’s contract is being renewed and not extended,” a senior BCCI source said.

Continuity ahead of the 50-over World Cup is one of the key factors behind the board’s decision.

During his tenure, the committee has taken several tough calls, including overseeing the Test retirements of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, and gradually phasing out senior pacer Mohammed Shami from international cricket.

It also made a bold selection call, dropping Test and ODI skipper Shubman Gill from the T20 World Cup squad and instead fielding a form player in Ishan Kishan.

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